

A CHAPTER IN THE BOOK

Real life stories that must be read



**Generations sharing narratives of
courage, sadness and positivity**

A CHAPTER IN THE BOOK - a collection of narratives from different folk who have a common story that must be told. Researching for many of us has been painful, but at the same time we all felt proud of how our families overcame unbelievable hardships and still kept their dignity and managed to make a life in their new countries.

Wild flora illustrations by... Rhoda and Robert
Burns from Connor Downs
in Cornwall

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The candle flame is both a memorial to the past
and a bright hope for the future.



Wood sorrel -A hedgerow plant found commonly in the UK

My Story

by

Ralph K



CONCEPT

The concept of this book came from an informal chat with a lifelong friend, Ronnie D, when we both realised that, despite our very different lives, we had common attitudes, thoughts, feelings and morals

Rather than struggling to write a full-length book, which might be too daunting, the idea was to contact many friends and acquaintances with a similar story to tell and condensing all their stories into one chapter each, hence:

CHAPTER IN THE BOOK

Discussing the idea, I was met with so much enthusiasm and this encouragement spurred me on. The historical facts are well documented but unless we tell **our** stories now, the human element will be lost forever. It is for this reason that I hope to enable these stories to be as widely read as possible to prevent it ever happening again.

I requested my fellow 'story-tellers' to write just one chapter

- A background about their parents and a little about previous generations- maybe where they were living...what they did.
- How they realised that they should leave (escape) with persecution finally forcing them out of their homes and countries.
- The 'journey', and how they arrived here in the UK (if they did), experiences on route and info about their early times in the UK (or wherever they initially arrived)

.....and to round off the story a little about the writer themselves

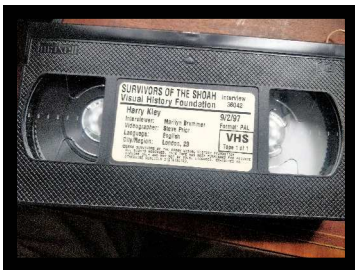
- Where they were born and grew up and how they felt about their place in society
- Education, with personal thoughts and anecdotes
- And finally, about their later life with partners or business life and up to date info

I apologise for using the word *stories*. In no way do I wish to imply that these are, in any way, fiction. No.... they are all real which makes it so hard to comprehend and why it is so important that we all have this outlet where they can be told.

Dad's Early Life In Germany

My father, Harry Kley, was born Horst Klee in Bad Godesburg (near Bonn) in Germany in 1922.

He was interviewed here in the UK in Sept 1997 as part of an initiative by Steven Spielberg. This SHOAH filmed interview was originally on a VHS tape made with the co-operation of nearly 52,000 survivors between 1994 and 1999, comprising Holocaust Survivors in 56 countries and 32 languages. These included survivors who were Jewish, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, liberators, political prisoners, rescuers, aid providers, Roma, Sintis and many others. VHS play back became difficult and technology had advanced, so some years ago I had the VHS tape transferred to DVD but the quality was not too good hence some detail here may need revision. In compiling this chapter, I was very proud of the quiet, controlled way my father responded to the interviewer in what must have been a totally devastating recall of events. A great, very special man.



***Survivors of The Shoah video ..interview
in 1997***

I deliberately have not dwelt on family names and details but I gather, listening to my late father's story, that these were happy times which rapidly changed for all Jews in Germany. I hope that this chapter of my father's story and my mother's, very different story, followed by a brief background of my life, will give readers an idea of what it must have been like to be persecuted in a country which you had looked on as home. Then being forced to escape, as a very young person, to an unknown country with no knowledge of what has happened to the family left behind, no knowledge of the language and with the over-riding feeling that you are hated.

Dad's maternal grandparents (my great-grandparents) had a butcher shop (not kosher) but they kept a kosher household. They were no longer alive when my father was born. His, paternal grandparents (my great-grandparents) had an antique furniture store and the families lived together in a large house over 3 floors. They were happy time and grandmother seemed to spend all day cooking, making her own jams, pickled fruit, home-pickled meats. etc. Matzos came from Frankfurt. Obviously, with an antique furniture shop, the house was well furnished and was unusually heated by steam.



My great grandparents



My father with his grandma

My great-grandfather considered himself a German first and a Jew second, having been decorated with an iron cross 1st and 2nd class in the First World War.

My grandfather was Maximillian Klee. There were only around 35 Jewish families and a small synagogue in Bad Godesberg.

Explanation

I will endeavour to portray the trauma and misery that must have been felt in as sensitive a way as I can, but I am quoting from an interview and adding/interweaving my impressions and comments because I feel that although this period in history is well documented, these true, real-life stories really need to be told.

Anyway, on with my story...where was I ?...(sorry to go off at a tangent again but I thought the background was very relevant.)... oh yes....

My father was at primary school for 4 years and Anti-Semitism was rife. The teachers were instructed to portray Jews in stereotypical ways. Dad said their teacher's biggest disappointment was that the three Jewish students in the school displayed none of these 'stereo-typical, features.

However, after a long period of being ostracised they were forced to leave and they then went to a Jewish school from May 1935 until April 1936

Meanwhile, grandfather's shop was labelled as 'Jewish-owned' and any people entering were stigmatised as 'Friends of Jews' and threatened with photos taken of them entering the shop which subsequently were published in the local papers.

This forced them to leave for smaller premises and Grandad commenced supplying farmers with bed linen. Dad realised that he would now need to find a profession that would enable him to use his skills internationally in order to leave Germany and he went as an apprentice into a Jewish-owned hotel in Koblenz for about 1 ½ years until the ownership became non-Jewish after which time Dad worked in restaurants.

One morning, when Dad arrived at his new restaurant workplace, the recently opened Café Silberbach, Glockengasses 2 in Cologne he saw it being smashed up and totally destroyed and *"the glee and gusto of the destructive crowds was evident."* These are Dad's words and remain with me to this day. (I understand from some recent research) that the café was a contact point for Jews trying to illegally cross the border into Belgium.)

Kristallnacht (November 9th and 10th 1938 when German Nazis attacked Jewish people and property) was the turning point. Dad decided he had to leave Germany immediately. Most of their non-Jewish neighbours did not seem to care about what was happening to the Jews. Dad went back home to Bad Godesberg and there followed a serious family discussion, but his parents (my grandparents) felt that they couldn't leave the very elderly great-grandparents.

My Grandparents with my father



The last time Dad saw his parents was on the 30th March 1939 when he departed from the station.

My grandmother Klee



My grandfather (left) with his first car



Much later The Red Cross informed Dad that my great-grandfather had died in Theresienstadt and my grandparents and great-grandmother were murdered in Auschwitz. Many other of the family were also murdered there and in other camps.

ARRIVING IN THE UK

A teacher from Dad's school, Mr. Bernard Grossman, managed to secure a trainee permit in England for Dad. He was good friend of my Dad's parents. Bernard Grossman was now residing in England and was headmaster of a refugee school in Cliftonville. This trainee permit was for The Northumberland Hotel and Mr Grossman had befriended Mr Gradel, the owner. This permit allowed Dad to travel by train via Holland to Harwich ultimately arriving in Liverpool Street in April 1939 speaking virtually no English. Dad was met there by 'Uncle Alfred' who had emigrated to England earlier and was living in Corringham Ave in Golders Green where Dad's enduring first impression was seeing a well-stocked greengrocery shop, unlike any he had seen in Germany. This 'first impression' remained with him for years.

Dad, as required, registered at Bloomsbury House, and then made his way to Cliftonville where he was well received at the hotel. However, when war broke out in September, Dad was classified as a 'friendly' enemy alien and was required to move from the coastline and the hotel subsequently closed. Dad then secured a job as a chef at The Red Lion in High Wycombe.

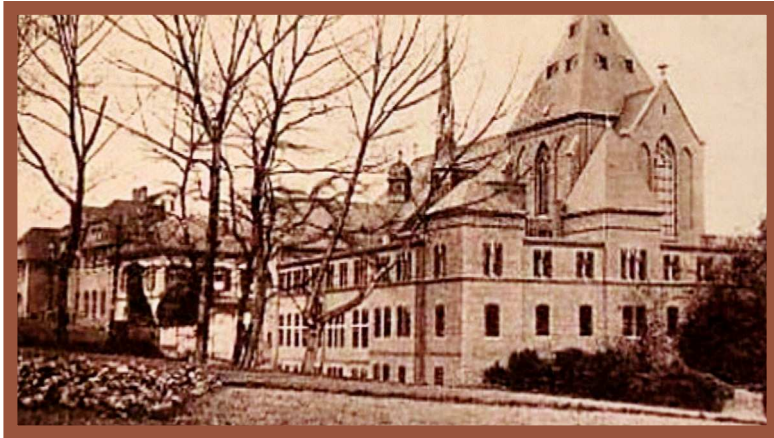
However, unfortunately this area also became a 'forbidden area' so Dad returned to London with a friend and together they found a small room in a house in Fellows Road in Swiss Cottage for approx. 6 months.

On 24th September 1940 the first air raid warning resulted in their land-lady requesting all tenants to shelter under the stairs. This had a quite important outcome.....*this is where he met my mother.*

This became a favourite family joke later with his grandchildren finding this 'under the stairs' meeting so romantic. They still talk about it.

July 1940 saw Dad interred, as a friendly alien, on various racecourses. He had already volunteered to join the army but was rejected as he was too young (only 16). However, later, by falsifying his age he was now able to join the Auxiliary Pioneer Corps where he remained for about 1 year. From there he joined the Service Corps near Reading learning how to drive lorries and eventually becoming a motor cycle instructor. By now Dad's English was improving

Dad had only heard from his parents once or twice via mail from the USA where he heard they had had to leave the family house in 1941 with all the Jews in the area and were made to share a large house in Bad Godesberg and then they all had to go into a convent in Bonn (see picture) and then on to Theresienstadt. They then ended up in Auschwitz.....after which Dad never heard from them again.



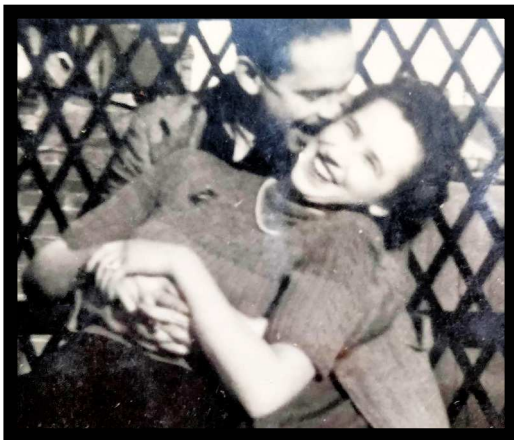
The monastery in Bonn (Kloster Endernich) where the Jews were incarcerated



My father

Dad married my mother, Ilse Bruckstein in 1942 in a synagogue in Oxford, even having to borrow 7/6d for the ring. Needless to say, there was no wedding party. A day trip to London Zoo was the full extent of the celebrations.

The 'meeting' of Mum and Dad is told later (in Mum's Story)



Mum & Dad in 1942



Mum, Dad and me (Oxford) 1944

The War Office required German-speaking people to apply for a position as interpreters and after an interview it was suggested that Dad should return to Germany in a role as a spy. However, as his parents were still there and it might have endangered them, he refused.

However, he became a counterespionage agent working behind enemy lines with 343 Security Section where he was trained to recognise German ranks, how to take over control of towns after de-Nazification had taken place. Then he was seconded to the American Army in 1945 and at Bruges they found a castle where the Germans had taken prisoners (mainly resistance) who had been savagely mistreated. They allowed these former prisoners to imprison their former captors.



Dad (on left) in France in 1944/1945



Dad on right

After being wounded with shrapnel in the knee, Dad was hospitalised in an excellent Canadian hospital in St Omer. This was for a period of around 2 months. Dad wrote home daily to mum explaining that he was walking on crutches and Mum immediately thought he had lost both legs.

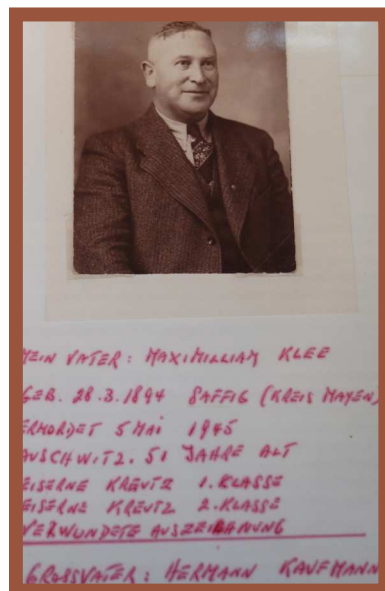
Eventually Dad re-joined his unit in Aachen and on to Bonn to help organise facilities there. It was already quite well organised but currency was useless with bartering being the established means of exchange. Dad was very aware in the attitude change in Bonn, his former home town. From arrogant swaggering Nazis, here now was a population in denial. When Dad let it be known that he was Jewish, they appeared, outwardly anyway, to be ashamed and were grovelling. Dad returned to his former family house, which he reclaimed. He was also successful in reclaiming the previous homes for two daughters of concentration camp victims.

None of my father's generation of original acquaintances in Bonn and Bad Godesberg admitted to knowing what had happened. Dad said he personally was aware of the deportations and of the concentration camps, but he did not know about 'death' camps. He was personally just too young to be sent to the concentration camps.

He was taught how to catch and interrogate spies. After the invasion in 1944 he went to Arromanches, and on to Caen, Rouen and on to Lille. (*Years later we had a small cottage in Normandy and Dad proudly showed us these towns but was unable to recognise much after all the time had passed*)



Grandma, Johanna Klee, murdered in 1945



Grandfather Maximilian Klee, murdered in 1945

At the end of the war the authorities in Aachen readily released the names of senior Nazis who were in the Belgian, Flemish and Dutch Wacht and people who had co-operated readily with the Nazis. Many had their blood group tattooed on their arms so were easily identifiable and they were imprisoned in camps without trial.

Lots of illegal smuggling and other more serious illegal offence were taking place. Dad was embarrassed about one particularly obnoxious character who took money from Jews to smuggle them across the border and then reported them to the authorities with obvious consequences. He was himself Jewish and was prosecuted.

AFTER THE ARMY AND CAREER IN THE UK

Dad was discharged in Aug 1946 with a further 6 months as a reservist. Dad did not regret any of that time and was young when he joined up and felt he was part of the liberation of the world from the scourge of Nazism.

He had changed his name at that time from Horst Klee to Harry Kley. Mum was still living with me in Oxford and Dad did not see me for 11 months. It was family joke that I called him 'Uncle' when he returned and Mum explained that he was my Daddy. Apparently, I then referred to him as "Uncle Daddy"

Dad went to work in a small dairy/grocery in Stoke Newington which Bernard Grossman (the teacher) from Germany had bought. They built the business up and Bernard eventually sold it and went back to teaching. Dad then joined a small company called Cohens Smoked Salmon and this grew, over the years, from 3 branches to 16 branches. Dad was instrumental in the success and rapid growth of the company and was the leading exponent of delicatessen in the UK giving many talks, writing in trade magazines and giving regular teaching seminars. This period was at the very start of the computer boom and Dad turned his talents to system integration using IT technology which was in its infancy

Dad was superb at organisation, possibly the German influence, and he could translate his concepts into programmes but computers themselves were not his thing. I even taught Dad how to use my original Amstrad.



Mum and Dad – early days



Dad working on my old Amstrad

Dad subsequently became Managing Director of the company. When it was eventually sold, Dad planned, and opened a restaurant in Bishopsgate called 'Delicity' However this was 3 years of hard work which he was glad to put behind him.

He then used his recently-acquired computer skills with Coca Cola/Schweppes as senior systems manager and project manager until at age 65 he retired but was called back as a consultant until 1990 when he had a heart attack

DAD & MUM (life together)

Meanwhile Mum was still in digs in Oxford when Dad commenced work in Stoke Newington and Dad had approached a decorator, he knew who had 3 attic rooms in his house in Crouch End which were unused but with no water etc. Obviously, Mum was delighted to come to London with me, and they moved into their 'dream flat' there.

They stayed for about a year and then managed to rent a house in Bush Hill Park (although renting a house then was almost unknown), eventually buying it and living there until 1993 when they bought a lovely apartment in Southgate where they lived very happily until the end.

I was their only child and family celebrations were always together with Lynn (my wife) and her family: Lily (Lynn's mother) and Morrie (Lynn's father) who both lived locally and lived to well over 90

Finally, Dad said that one thing that comes out of this is that Jews must not be dominated...

'We must stand up for ourselves if we don't... no-one else will. '

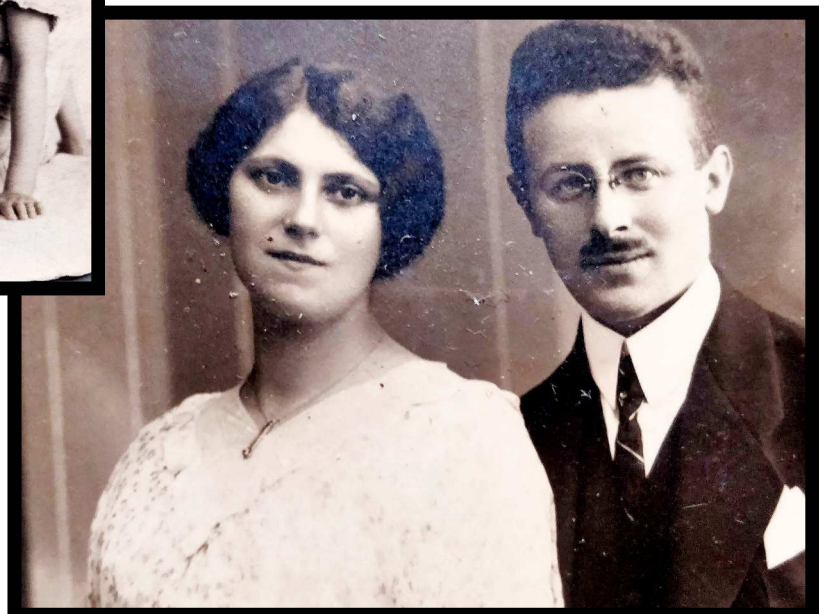
Mum and Dad were happily married for 58 years, dad dying in 2000 and mum in 2016

MUM'S STORY

My mother, Ilse Kley was born Ilse Bruckstein in Danzig (now known as Gdansk) in 1920. This was a free city that was originally Polish and then became German. My Aunt Eva was her older sister and my Uncle Hans her younger brother.



My maternal grandparents



My Grandfather, Artur and Grandmother Paula had a very well-known long-established Antiquarian book/ fine art shop in the main shopping street. Minnah, their live-in maid helped with the housework and looking after Hans too.

Mum spent a very happy childhood in a select neighbourhood in a quite big apartment enjoying a good standard of living. Her parents were very loving and there were many relatives, both sets of grandparents and lots of friends.

Summer was usually spent at the seaside in Zoppot about 12 kms away where a cottage was rented with Grandad commuting the 20 minutes back to the shop on weekdays. (see photo below...Mum on left)



On the beach in Zoppot (Poland) in 1927



The family in Danzig in 1933 (mum on right)

The shop (see photos, then and now) had been opened by my great grandfather about 1880. Later Grandad and an uncle joined the firm after training in fine art to recognise the high value paintings on sale. Their clientele were people of high rank. The shop was the only one where second-hand school books could be exchanged and as the new school year started at Easter that's when the children had to buy their new books and world maps. It was an expensive time for their parents and the shop was very busy at that time. Mum vividly remembers that she was allowed to help in the shop at that time, not serving, but arranging the books neatly on the shelves.



The family shop (marked x) in 1930



as it was in 2005

1925 Danzig, Mum (left), Great Grandma, sister Eva



1925, Danzig, Grandma, Great Grandma, Grandpa

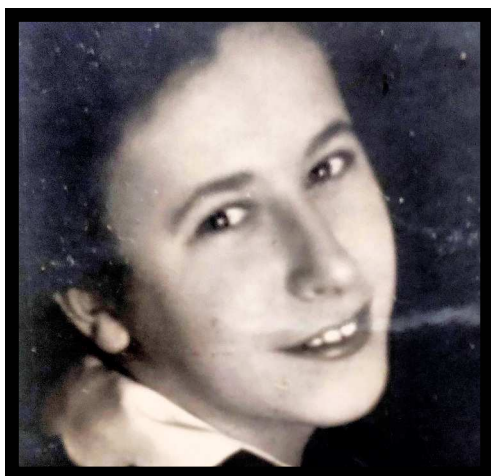


Mum had very happy memories until Hitler appeared and then life changed dramatically.

Being a Jewish shop, no non-Jews were allowed to enter without putting their life in danger but the family were assured that only 'the Polish Jews' were being discriminated against. In 1936 Mum, sister Eva and brother Hans were forced out of High School and had to join a Jewish School which consisted of just two classes for youngsters aged 11-15. My Uncle Hans, her brother, was in the lower class.

My parent' experiences, despite both being from different countries and with very different backgrounds were remarkably similar: both in how the discrimination effected both families and also in their following life.

Great Grandad had died a natural death by then. Mum was engaged at that time and she had gone to her boyfriend's families shop in Milchgenstrasse but Nazis were standing outside and shouted out that she mustn't go into the shop as " it was a Jewish shop". Mum said I'm Jewish and I'm going in. Eva, her sister, left to go to Reno in South America to marry a man called Frankenstein, who nobody in the family liked. To everybody's disbelief she returned to Danzig with the marriage annulled and unconsummated. This was a difficult time and causing family fury because whatever the marital situation, she was far better off in South America than returning to Danzig,



Mum in 1937 (aged 17)

**Danzig 1938
(Mum aged 18)**



By now, Mum was working in an office when one evening at the end of 1937 grandad came home obviously greatly upset. A big hush fell over the family because things had become so bad by then that one always feared the worst. He told the family that he had been advised by a person of authority to leave the country the same day as there was an arrest warrant out for him. He had been warned that the following day might be too late. If they did not go immediately, they would all be taken to a concentration camp. The concocted reason he was given was that his account books "were not right". The same fabricated story was told to his brother Felix Bruckstein. Grandad knew the story was concocted as he was scrupulously honest, but he believed the threats.

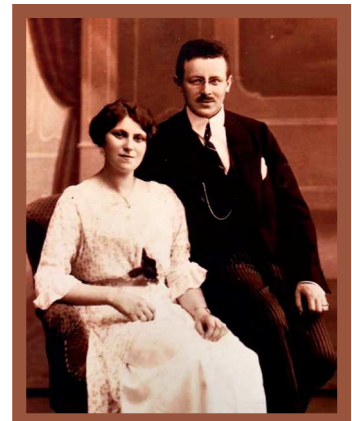
Mum said the decision was heart-breaking but there was no time for tears and scenes and they had to act as fast as possible. Grandma packed 5 small suitcases one for each of them: two daughters, Ilse (my mother) and sister Eva, brother Hans and for themselves. Meanwhile Grandpa gave the shop keys to a local Jewish removal firm asking them to come to the shop at night and load the van and bring as much stock as possible across the border to Poland where the family were escaping to. This was about 20 minutes away. This desperate step was the only hope my family had of saving anything. Minah their maid who was considered one of the family had been with the family for 15 years but as she was not Jewish, she remained in their apartment with all the family possessions and furniture etc.

When darkness fell, they all left. Luckily, they all had Danzig Free State passports. It was formerly Polish, and was then invaded by Germany. All they took with them was a change of underwear and, as it was October, something warm. They travelled 20 minutes by train to the border and on to Oliva in Poland. They went from house to house seeking accommodation but no one could accommodate 5 people. Eventually a Polish family must have felt sorry for the fleeing family and offered 2 rooms in the attic with a tiny kitchen and a sloping roof and a huge range, but they were warned the rooms were not brilliant. Mum said it was terrible. Their toilet was across a yard with a bucket to flush it. Communication was impossible as none of the family could speak Polish and they were penniless. Before daylight Grandad went to the border crossing to watch for the furniture van and watched in horror as it was turned back. He found out later that the driver had no passport and had to return to Danzig where all the goods were confiscated. *The family were destitute*

Hans was only 11 and too young to work and the parents could not return to Germany as they had illegally absconded. Mum and Eva were therefore the only breadwinners and they had to support the family. Eva and Mum made the daily 30-minute train journey which was highly dangerous as their 'blacklisted names' might be spotted and they could be used as hostages to get my Grandparents back. The two girls found an inner strength and managed to continue working for approx. three months. At a family discussion, Mum said she was going to emigrate but Grandma said "no-one was speaking to you - you are a child". However, Mum was crossing daily into Germany to work and unknown to the family she went to The British Consulate in Danzig. Mum and Eva said they covered their names on their passports as they crossed the border, but the border guards were quite friendly and knew the girls. Poor grandad waited fearfully every night for them to return safely.

At the British Consulate, Mum got one of the first available visas to England: a domestic servant permit for housework. With this permit Mum said she felt like she had a personal invitation from the Royal Family. It seems that Mum was too young to appreciate that her parents needed her there but Mum wasn't aware of this at the time. A heart-breaking parting from parents, siblings and friends and then that horrible feeling that Mum may never see them again.

***My maternal grandparents, Artur & Paula
Bruckstein***



...Meanwhile.....My Grandparents Story

Later, unknown to Mum, their home synagogue in Danzig was not burnt but had been sold and with the money many in the congregation, including Raffie Shear's parents, managed to charter a boat to sail (illegally) to Palestine. Their journey was terrible. The boat was way too small and initially they were refused permission to land. They were 3 months at sea and Hans (Mum's brother) had his Bar mitzvah on board. They changed boats and the boat capsized. They had to scramble and swim ashore. When Mum got the news that the boat had capsized, she feared her parents had died. However, she later got a message written on toilet paper that they had survived and were in Tel Aviv in Palestine, living with the Shnellers, Grandad's sister, who had arrived earlier. Grandma had developed typhoid on the long voyage and Grandad did not recognise her in hospital with her shaved head. To carve out a living, after they had recovered from this terrible journey, Grandad started delivering meat on a bike and Grandma went from house to house selling stockings

1939..In Tel Aviv, (l to r) my Aunt Eva, my Grandma, my Uncle Hans & Grandfather



They lived in Holon near Tel Aviv where Grandad later died but they did manage, with family help, to come to my Bar mitzvah in London. After Grandad died, the family continued to support Grandma but she didn't want to go into a home and when she was dying she asked for Mum, but my parents sadly didn't have the money to allow Mum to travel from the UK to Israel. This haunted Mum for many years

Back to Mum's Journey....

She left from the station in Danzig but as my grandparents couldn't enter Danzig they couldn't even see her off. Eva, her sister, and friends from Danzig were at the station and all she had was 10 guilden (less than £10.00). On this frightening journey it suddenly hit Mum that she was alone, going to a foreign country leaving family behind and not even knowing the language. She began to cry and a Nazi in uniform, on the train, took pity on Mum, giving her his coat as it was cold. Mum explained she was emigrating to England and on the way to Hanover. However, at the station, the family meeting mum all looked very Jewish so he must have realised why Mum was emigrating, and promptly disappeared.

The family meeting Mum were cousins, Inge and Ellen and they put Mum up overnight, and in the morning they put mum on the onward train. This, however proved to be the wrong train, but luckily, in the meantime, the family had realised their mistake, and somehow arranged for Mum to transfer to the right train. The actual details of this momentous journey have all been forgotten but Mum somehow arrived in England at Harwich. She said she has no idea where she stayed or how she arrived. She thinks, because of the trauma, it must have been blotted out of her mind. Apparently, she followed other people boarding a train to Liverpool Street where it had been arranged for someone to meet her. However, the Jewish Committee person was not there as it was Friday night and Bloomsbury House was closed. Luckily Mum had befriended a middle-aged German-speaking woman on the train travelling to London. This lady was being met by her German daughter and English son-in-law son and her 3 year-

old grandson. They obviously felt sorry seeing Mum distressed waiting patiently on the platform, with a just a hat box and small suitcase. This was around 23rd December 1938 and they took Mum home and she stayed with them and enjoyed her first Xmas in England but quite alone. Again, Mum cannot remember where this was, or the name of the woman. This family tried to contact Bloomsbury House but found it closed for Christmas and they looked after Mum until after Christmas. Mum's 4 years of English lessons on a school bench proved totally lacking, not even being able to converse with the young boy. When Christmas was over, this kind family even drove Mum to The Jewish Board in Bloomsbury House where she was seated in an area with other refugees which dealt with 'domestics'. Mum felt that it was like a cattle market waiting to be picked for slaughtering.

Mum was 'picked' by a very nice elderly couple and taken away in their car after all the formalities were completed. A long, long journey of about 6 hours followed, in which Mum was unable to communicate, as her English was not good enough. She constantly fell asleep and was unable to ask where they were headed. She felt terribly unhappy and didn't care about what was happening. As darkness fell it seemed like they had arrived at the end of civilisation. The couple lived in Hereford in Whitchurch in a very nice house called Ragged House on farmland surrounded by a huge garden. He was Colonel Ruxton. MC OBE, a retired army colonel. As they arrived, he said the family were going to a friend on a neighbouring farm and Mum should make herself a cup of tea. She had no idea 'how to make a cup of tea' as she had never made tea before. Mum was so frightened and went to bed in her clothes.

On the first morning he woke Mum to show her how to light the big kitchen stove but he ended up lighting it himself every day as it continuously went out when Mum attempted to light it. They obviously were very disappointed as they wanted a home help to assist them but mum had never been shown how to do housework. The people were very kind and understanding but Mum was terribly lonely and homesick. Back at home Minnah their maid had done all the housework from the time Hans was born. Mum said the family must have had the patience of saints as Mum obviously was a millstone around their neck, just sitting in their kitchen not quite knowing what was expected of her or where to start. Luckily, they employed a local lady as a charwoman, coming in three times a week to do the rough work. Mum just did a little dusting and laid the table for meals. In the kitchen they had bells summoning the staff to certain rooms but Mum had no idea where these rooms were. Every time the bell rang she jumped with fright. Realising she was lonely, they said mum should go to the pictures in the local village and meet people but she was frightened that she would not find her way back. Mum said that the furthest she ventured out was to the washing line in the garden.

After about a fortnight they finally said they would take her back to Bloomsbury House in London by train where mum could find a job with other German-speaking people where they felt she would be happier.

They were very decent and they even helped Mum getting a job in Woking. This new family were very comfortably off and Mum was taken in a chauffeur-driven car to a wonderful house in Surrey set in beautiful grounds. Mum said she was flabbergasted never having seen such luxury before. The gardener took Mum's case up to the room which would become home for the next year and a half.

The gardens were like a cultivated park employing two full-time gardeners. The tennis court in one corner was surrounded by huge trees and the small kitchen garden was the only outside area that the staff could use and they were told always to use the staff entrance.

The family comprised husband (which the staff referred to as 'Our Sir') and his South American wife and their two daughters. He was Chairman of The Bank of England and was chauffeur-driven daily to London. When Mum was introduced to him, she offered to shake hands but this was 'not the done thing' and her proffered hand fell back to her side. It immediately became very clear that there was a vast difference between servants and the family in the house.

My original draft of this story contained a very detailed account of Mum's experiences here which obviously contrasted enormously with her earlier life. However, I have greatly condensed it.



Mum in her uniform



All went well until September 1939 when war was declared and Edith and Mum, having Danzig 'Free City' passports were declared 'Friendly Aliens' but the other German staff were declared 'Enemy Aliens'. They had long nightly discussions and both agreed that they had no wish to remain as servants for ever and Edith, as the oldest, would leave first and head for London. Once she had got them a furnished room it was agreed that Mum would also hand in her notice and follow.

The family were very reluctant to let either of them go as they were both very useful with the added bonus of looking good in the house. Mum and Edith left the cook behind which was heart-breaking but she joined her daughter who had come over as a child and stayed with an English family.

Edith succeeded in securing a room in Fellows Road, Swiss Cottage.....*which, for those of you who have been following the plot closely, will remember was the same address where my father was living with his friend Hans (on the floor above)*. The girl's room cannot have been very nice because mice running round the meter cupboard kept them awake every night and they were frightened to get out of bed. To dry their clothes Mum and Edith strung a line from the cupboard turning the gas ring on fully to make it a bit warmer. However, the cupboard collapsed under the weight of the wet clothes.

After this long period of being 'in service' Mum suddenly had a wonderful feeling of freedom, of not having to work if she didn't feel like it. However, this feeling of freedom was short lived as bombs were now falling on London and many nights were spent in air-raid shelters. The saved money was rapidly running out and their room was very shabby and they were depressed having left such a luxurious environment behind.

A mutual friend wrote to them from Oxford where she was living in a house opposite her mother. This mother and daughter had moved to Oxford to escape the London bombing. Their landlady was willing to rent two rooms to Edith and Mum and as they had no ties in London, they decided to move. This was at 17 Bedford Road Oxford with the Harris's, a lovely couple of elderly spinster ladies,

Mum did mention that she had met a very nice man (Dad) in London who came from The Rhineland (in Germany), and who was sharing a room with a friend in the same house. Mum explained to Dad that this could only be a friendship as she would be joining her fiancée in South America when possible.

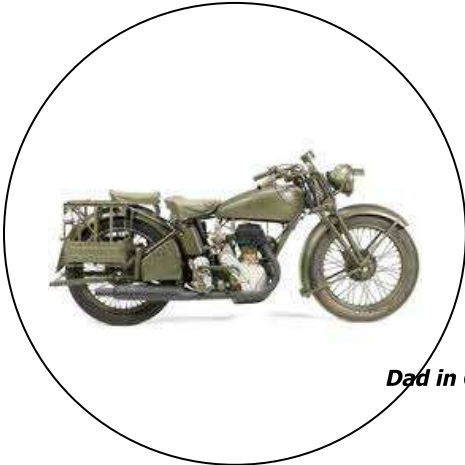
However, later, Mum wrote to her fiancée in South America calling off the engagement saying she had been too young when they had got engaged and as they hadn't seen one another for a long time she had met someone here. As it happened, Mum's boat to South America had been cancelled on several occasions, because of the war. Mum and Dad decided this was fate

SPOILER ALERT..I wouldn't be writing this story if she had left the UK!

However, their friendship developed into a love affair and they wanted it to become permanent if they should survive the war. Dad having fallen in love with Mum gave her a diamond ring from his family, (which Mum took off every time when going into her room with Edith) As Dad was now interned and subsequently joined the army, nothing held Mum to London.

At that time Dad was stationed in Reading and often managed to get a weekend pass and frequently came home

to Oxford. Dad was by now, an army dispatch rider



Dad in Calais around 1944



and once was leading a convoy, passing close to their flat in Oxford, so he made a detour and, unknown to him, the whole convoy followed him and mum ended up making tea for them all.

They got married shortly after in the old synagogue in Oxford and at that time Mum worked in the Co-op Dairy bottling milk. She sometimes took some milk bottles home and once when seeing Dad at the station she waved excitedly and promptly dropped the hidden bottles. The wedding party consisted of 10 people in the flat with Dad providing the food from his haversack (and presumably Mum provided the milk) - and he had made hearts to decorate the walls of the flat.

I was born two years later and the Harris's were so kind. They took Mum by taxi to Radcliff Maternity and I arrived a week early (I am still early for appointments). Dad was amazed when arriving a week later to be told he had a son. Dad then went to London to get a job with Bernard Grossman (his old teacher from Germany) in his shop. Mum, Dad and myself had moved from Oxford to London and were now living in a quite basic flat in Crouch Hall Road in Crouch End. I was about 1 ½ -2 years old.

They were looking for a better place and while Dad was in Lesley Rickets Estate Agent office, Mum was waiting outside where she saw an advert in the window advertising a house to let. A rental house was virtually unknown at that time, and the agent explained that there was a long waiting list but allowed Dad and Mum to view it. They took the shop's van and managed to view the house immediately.

The house was owned by twins, the Morley's, who had both been blinded by a bomb blast on the same day. By sheer luck, one of the twins recognised Dad's voice from when he had put his blind charity collection box in Dad's shop in Stoke Newington. He said despite there being a list of 4 potential renters, he wanted Dad to have the house conditional on Mum and Dad buying the carpet for which he wanted the princely sum of £4.10s. Mum and Dad thought they were in paradise.

When rounding up her story Mum said....

"This is why we are so careful with everything because we were so long without anything, We made it work.."

My story

Just a little background as to what prompted me to write my **CHAPTER IN THE BOOK**

I am now 76 and have had a fascinating life. Coronavirus has currently hit the world obviously making a real

difference to our lives but possibly with many in 'lockdown' now we have the perfect opportunity to put the story our family have told us down into print.

Being a first-generation English/Jewish citizen, despite being born in Oxford in the UK, I have never felt that I belonged totally to any particular group. I was certainly not German, despite hearing and speaking German at home. I was not totally Jewish as I was one of only a few Jewish pupils in a large English Grammar School. I was not totally English as my parents were never totally 'British' with their obvious foreign accents and without an English background.

With Mum's strong accent she was often asked where she was from and, rather than going into a long detailed story, she always replied " I am from Bush Hill Park, Enfield"

This probably underlines that she also felt 'different' and was not comfortable detailing her background.

As a young person I wanted to 'fit in'not to be different, but as a young person one has not got the strength of character to celebrate the difference. I personally sometimes felt embarrassed that my parents spoke with heavy accents (as I, being born here, could pass as English). As one becomes more mature, one relishes being different - but that comes later. This is just a little background as to what prompted me to write this chapter in the book:

I still don't fully 'fit in' in any environment...the difference is that now with my great family I don't mind.

Moving from Oxford to London with my mother, to join Dad in London, is only remembered by looking at faded photos showing a handsome Dad in uniform and a very young, pretty mum. Infant and junior schools are remembered a little better. After passing the 11 plus exam, as it was then, I commenced at Latymer, an excellent grammar school. With my love of Hospitality, I went on to study Hotel Management and Catering at Hendon College of Technology. This later became Middlesex Poly and finally University of Middx. The four-year course entailed 7 months college-based training followed by Hotel experience in leading hotels for 5 months each year. I graduated with The National Diploma in Hotel and Catering. Over 50 years later I became a FIH (Fellow of the Institute of Hospitality)

This love of the international hospitality trade and food appreciation is definitely due to my family background.

Dad tried to explain to me about The Holocaust, what it meant, and he was delighted that Tammy (our daughter) was so interested in everything about The Holocaust, having been to Anne Frank's House. Darren-Paul (our son) less so. Dad said that I viewed it very much as a second generation but he felt that my generation is also affected by it. He is right but in many 'difficult to describe' ways. The main effect on Dad is that feeling of not belonging (not to England and not to Germany) one is always a 'foreigner'. The accent one never loses and the question he was always asked in Germany is "where do you feel at home" and he answered "Not Germany ...you killed my parents and you don't know what civil liberties are, as you still have to register when you move from place to place and you still have to carry an identity card. None of this is required in England, although this freedom is often not appreciated as it has always been the status quo in England"

You will notice that these 'feeling' were also very apparent to me..so, yes, it crosses generations.

When Dad was asked, are you religious? He replied, "No, we are traditionally Jewish and I have always enjoyed the tradition." All friends from Dad's olden days came to my Bar mitzvah at the Hendon Hall Hotel (which they could ill-afford) They were still friends with the same people mostly from similar backgrounds but have had many English Jewish and non-Jewish friends.

I went back to Germany with Mum in 1951 because Dad felt it was necessary to give impetus to speedy restitution settlement. This proved to be the case. He went back every year since then. Mum and Dad and others originally from the Bonn area were invited back by the City of Bonn in 1981 for The Beethoven Festival. It was a very emotional gathering as nobody knew who had survived. Dad said it was like seeing people coming back from the dead

The Lord mayor decided that it would be held every year. Dad wanted it be more than just a social concept and

wanted to know what the current children were being taught and he was told that they were being taught everything. The representative from the Jewish/Christian society allowed Mum and Dad personally to see what was being taught in schools in Germany themselves. She sent all the books with the history of the period but Dad found they only contained the cold facts so she arranged a meeting of teachers to see what they themselves knew. These teachers were about my age and they agreed they knew very little of the actual trauma but they just knew the facts. This is one of the reasons for this book.

Their parents professed not to know where the Jewish people had gone. Dad suggested that they (MUM & DAD) were 'time witnesses' they would come into schools from 1985 onwards and dad and mum continued to do this. Others were unable to talk about it



Mum and Dad giving one of their many school talks in Germany



Dad unveiling the memorial plaque on the Rhine with The Lady Mayoress

The following year a memorial was built in the Jewish Cemetery.

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Einweihung des Denkmals für die ermordeten Godesberger Juden

OB: „Ein Zeichen gegen das Vergessen gesetzt“

bof Bad Godesberg. Als einen Akt der Trauer, Erschütterung und Hoffnung bezeichnete Landesrabbiner Henry G. Brandt die Einweihung des Mahnmals mit der Aufschrift „Zum Gedenken an die Mitglieder der Synagogengemeinde Bad Godesberg-Mehlem, die durch deutsche Schuld in den Jahren der nationalsozialistischen Herrschaft ermordet wurden“.

Der Gedenkstein wurde gestern von Initiator Harry Kley und Oberbürgermeisterin Barbel Dieckmann enthüllt, in Beisein von ehemaligen verfolgten Bonnern, die zur Zeit an der deutsch-jüdischen Begegnungswoche teil-

einzig in seiner Familie der Vergasung im Konzentrationslager Auschwitz. Vor dem Mahmal, neben den Gräbern von Godesbergern jüdischen Glaubens, erinnerte er an die Erniedrigung, Verschleppung und Ermordung der Mitglieder der Synagogengemeinde Bad Godesberg-Mehlem. „Ihre einzige Schuld war, daß sie Juden waren“. Und er erinnerte sich an „zwei gute Menschen“, die seinen Eltern ESpakete nach Theresienstadt geschickt hatten.

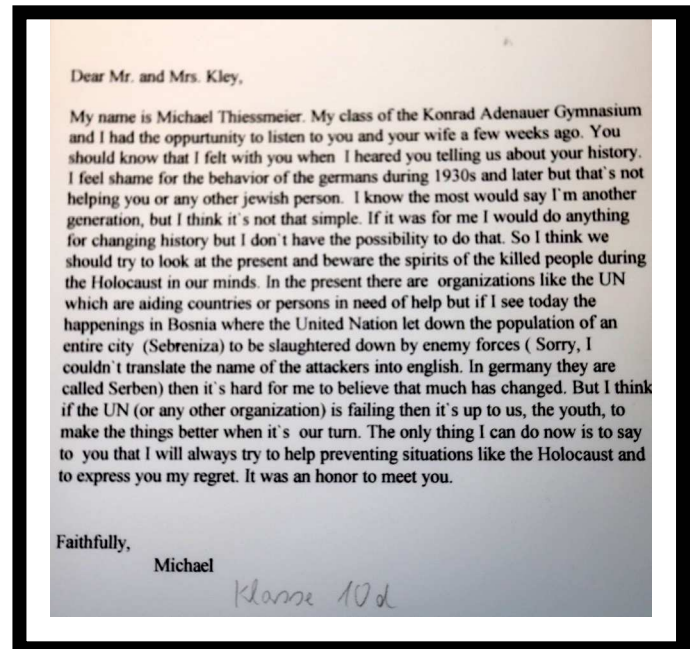
Kley bedankte sich bei der Deutsch-Jüdischen Gesellschaft, der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Bonn, der Ge-

gessenheit gerät“, so Dieckstein sei keine Wiedergabe ein „Zeichen, daß wir gessen“.

Ein Zeichen, um „Abscheu gefühlt zu bekunden“, me der Landesrabbiner. „Mit derer Intensität, so der lbiner“ sei heute noch die rung über die sechs Millio spurbar, die unter Hitler menschen“ gequält, in di trationslager transportiert hollischen Qualen“ ermord Warum die christlichen Ki „Stimme gegen die Barb

Dad put his experiences across by inviting the children to see how they would feel if these things were happening to their parents in business and everyday life and to themselves in school. How they would feel if their parents were burned or gassed in the gas ovens.This initiative was copied later in many other parts of Germany. Dad felt that it was so important that it must not happen again and the children were the future. Dad gave lectures to Air Force, army nurses and theological students. Dad always felt that students, especially older ones, were very interested. He received many letters and one letter stood out. This was from a Turkish student who sent a letter (see photo) saying that he felt a like an 'Untermensch'. (A person of a lower standing)

***The memorable letter from Michael, the
Turkish student in Germany***



Dad was in contact with Jews in Bonn but none were the original German Jews. These were mainly of Russian origin. Very few of the original Jewish population that had been spared returned to Bonn..maybe only 5 or 6 . There is a new synagogue in Bonn. The old one was burnt down. A Norwegian organisation bought the site and when the foundations of the synagogue were discovered the bricks were used for a memorial on the Rhine. This became a focal point for remembrance. Dad unveiled it with the Israeli ambassador.

Dad also unveiled a plaque in Bad Godesberg (see photo) and the following year a memorial was built in the Jewish Cemetery which is beautifully looked after by local school children. Lynn and I were proud to accompany him on this visit and I still remember that the Bonn Museum opened specially for us and showed us a letter written by a Righteous Gentile with food sent to my Grandparents at one of the camps. There was also a continuous video loop of Dad speaking about what it had been like to be Jew living locally in Hitlers period. This left a lasting impression on us.

In 1964 I married Lynn, my lovely wife, and we have now been married for 56 years. Yes, we've had hassles like everyone else during such a long marriage (anyone that says differently is either a liar...or a liar!). Dad and Mum were always there to discuss things with and we both always felt that they were very even in their judgements and advice. They came down on the side of right, common sense and fairness and this must have come from their own, much more difficult struggles

I went on to run restaurants and manage hotels, mainly in London (including Soho and The Kings Road Chelsea in the 'swinging sixties') before starting my own catering business.

Initially I catered for private house and marquee parties and this business grew until I opened a delicatessen shop Arkay Cuisine (based on my initials 'RK') in Cockfosters, followed by a second unit in Radlett. Looking back, this seems obvious now that I reflected in some way, my father's early career. The catering continued, but by now I had also branched out into recipe development and introduced many innovative products.

It is hard to believe that Lynn and I were around before the internet but we leapt into the computer age with gusto, mainly, possibly to avoid the mind-numbing typing out of quotes etc. Entrees-Ontrays.com was one of the very first .com companies and immediately this become well established with a different clientele which was now corporate rather than private.

Dad had 'dipped his toes' into IT and we often discussed how to set up websites etc. That was still in the days when you had to have basic programming code knowledge so it shows how old I am. I eventually had over 16 websites, increasing in sophistication with e-commerce on the later ones I built a catering production unit and had a great team of loyal and very cheerful staff and organised inter school/college catering competitions

After over 51 years in catering I retired, terminating with my 'baby', this being an innovative soft drink, '**Sass**', which I developed and produced with two production runs. It was a totally new concept for me which Lynn and I totally enjoyed. Lynn, now also retired, and I now travel widely and our recent joint Nepal trek achieved our goal to take books and money to a school high in Annapurna. We trekked for ten days including one 15 hour day. I also volunteer teaching maths in a school (which is totally amazing to anyone aware of my (lack of) maths ability. Photography has always been my passion (other than Lynn!) and my 70 albums (Tutonically arranged) were followed by digitally printed 'Photo History' books chronicling family, country - indeed anything, and i am currently on Volume 112

Tamara, our daughter was born in 1969 at a mere 2lbs. blossoming into a very special daughter, Her husband Ben with his great boys, John and Jack and Ilana our 21year-old granddaughter (recently graduated) complete the picture.

Our great adventurous son, Darren-Paul Kley was born in 1972 also now has two wonderful children, Beau-Phineas and Esme-Peach. Angela, their mother is also a very special lady and we are all very close keeping in touch with news and general chatter

What underlines the family influence best to me is the happy recollections of our children and grandchildren. Sitting on Grandma's or Grandad's knee when they sang 'Hoppe, hoppe reiter' (an 1800's rhyme where the child sits on the lap pretending to ride a horse ...falling off causes great laughter). Max und Moritz stories (black humorous childish pranks from 1865) and looking at my battered version of 'Struwwpeter' (a moral story in couplets from 1845 telling of disastrous consequences of bad behaviour)all very German influences.

I hadn't realised what a great influence my parents had on our children and grandchildren. Having the pleasure of growing up with grandparents denied to me is a great sadness.

Our family were all really loved by Mum and Dad and I was always so aware of Dad, when surrounded by our small but extremely close family saying

"Hitler whatever you wanted to do to the Jews..you did not do it to this family."

Dad managed to create an outstanding life being a very real good influence on many, many people especially his family. He died in 2000 having been on dialysis for a few years but maintaining his great sense of humour to the end.

Mum, a very understated lady, with a great strength of character, was a devoted wife, mother and grandmother. She had had such a life-style change that would have totally defeated many others. She provided such a great example to us all and their happy and long marriage displayed this. Our children and grandchildren and Lynn and myself have such a massive amount to thank them for.

However, the one outstanding memory I have of them both is at family times together where Mum and Dad looked round at the family and the pride on their faces spoke volumes

Ralph Kley...July 2020

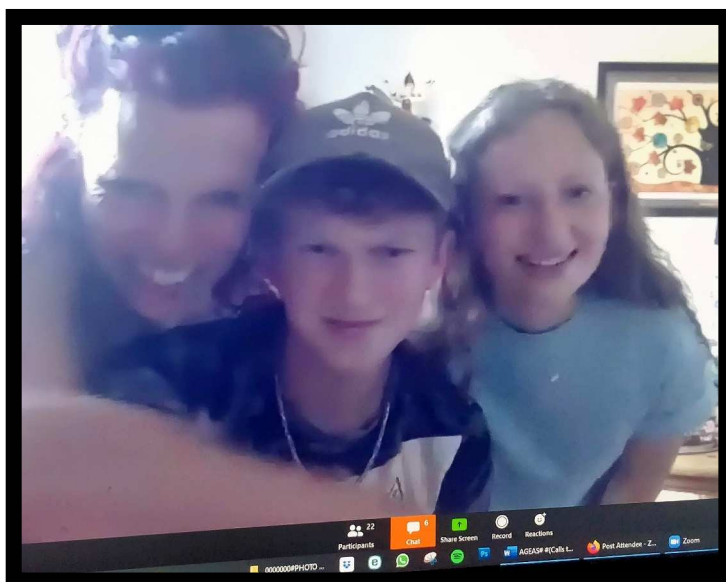
***The family together on my 70th birthday in January 2014
Back row (l to r) Peachy (granddaughter) Lynn(wife) Ben (son-in-law) Beau (grandson), Darren-Paul (son), and kneeling in total submission is me..***



Our son, Darren-Paul



Granddaughter, Larnie (left) and Tammy our daughter 'on their way to Ascot'



Mum Angela with our grand-children Beau and Peachy on Zoom at Beau's 16th birthday



Camion. A wild pink flower

My Story **by** **Marion G**



Marion Carol Godfrey nee Wiener

I was born to refugee parents on 11 June 1946, the eldest of two children, to Gerda Wiener nee Schmitz and Edgar Hans Wiener, in the General Lying in Hospital in Lambeth, South London, the other hospitals nearer our family home in Belsize Park, North London, having been evacuated due to the Blitz bombing of London and not yet having returned. My brother, Stephen Julian, followed on 25 December in 1950 and he was born in Hampstead, at St. Mary's Nursing Home on Whitestone Pond, where he immediately embarked on a dramatic career playing Jesus in their nativity play. Unfortunately, this early promise has not been fulfilled and to this day, he has never trodden the boards again, preferring instead to confine his thespian activities to the domestic realm.

My mother, known as 'Omi' to her grandchildren and great grandchildren until her death in London on 4 July 2008, was born on 25 December 1917, in Bonn, Germany. She was one of two children born to Wilhelm Schmitz and Karoline nee Neumann, and grew up with four other children, my aunt Rosi and three others, the children of Wilhelm's first wife, who had died when Rosi was just three.

Gerda recalls growing up when the Rhineland was occupied by the French and being scared of the fierce Moroccan cavalry regiment with their red fez hats and long sabres. There was a great deal of political unrest during her childhood, but she remembered it as being a very happy childhood. Her parents kept a shoe shop and indeed, Wilhelm was a shoe maker and could actually make shoes from scratch. We don't know much about him, only that he died in Theresienstadt in or around 1943, luckily, before he was transported to Auschwitz, like the other members of the family. It is difficult to research someone called Wilhelm Schmitz – Bill Smith – and so our searches have so far proved fruitless. Gerda, my mother, was good at school and very athletic. ...unlike me!

My father, Edgar Hans Wiener, was born in Offenbach, near Frankfurt, Germany, on 1 April 1914, the only son of Hedwig nee Stern (born 22 February 1885 in Frankfurt and died 7 February 1972 in London) and Julius Wiener (born 13 December 1876 and died in London May 20 1958). They were a very affluent family and had two big department stores (Firma Wronka) in Offenbach and Frankfurt. Unusually, the family had a car (a 'Horch' – the forerunner of Audi) and a chauffeur and took holidays abroad, skiing in Switzerland in winter and holidaying on the Belgian coast in summer. My father also recalled a happy childhood, although he also remembered his father being furious when the chauffeur had secretly taught Daddy to drive, and saying: 'Why do you want to drive? We have people to do that sort of thing for us!' He also had piano lessons, but angered his teacher by not practising the classics, preferring instead to be Frankfurt's answer to jazz pianist, Hoagy Carmichael. He was very musical and played the piano by ear, which we all enjoyed far later, gathered around the piano at my brother's home and my home on a family Friday night. The musical strain has been passed to the next two generations and my brother plays well and his daughter plays superbly, having earned money while at uni in Manchester entertaining the public in a hotel piano bar. Me? Well, I'm the Florence Foster Jenkins of the piano. Need I say more?

The Nazis came to power in the early 1930s, after the great Depression, when Julius Wiener was having to pay his staff twice a day, because money was losing its value so quickly, and he wanted to enable the staff in his stores to buy something useful, for example, food. A few grains of rice, an orange or a loaf of bread cost millions and millions of Reichsmark – the German currency at the time!

In 1937, things became very difficult for Jewish families and on Kristallnacht in 1938, grandfather Julius was arrested and taken to Dachau concentration camp. Meanwhile, my father, Hans, as he was known, although his first name was actually Edgar (my grandma must have read King Lear) had managed to move to England in 1937 and taken a job as a cellar man for a wine merchant, since he knew quite a lot about wine. He then volunteered for the Pioneer Corps in the British army, where he was among friends, all speaking with a heavy German accent, a fact that locals near the bases at which they were stationed at found highly improbable. Indeed, he awoke in hospital after a car crash which killed the two RAF men with whom he was hitching a lift back to base, to find the police by his bedside. He had been muttering in German and they thought he was one of Hitler's first paratroopers! A call to the CO at base in Derbyshire soon cleared that up. Shortly before being invalided out of the army on account of flat feet (!), he had worked tirelessly to get his parents out of Germany and succeeded, with the help of non-Jewish friends in Germany, and a guarantor here in London, a distant relative, Julius Oppenheimer, and so Hedwig and Julius arrived in England in the nick of time, leaving all their possessions behind them.

My mother, Gerda, managed to obtain a domestic visa for herself and her elder sister, Rosi and on 15 March 1939, they said goodbye to friends and family and boarded the train for the coast, bound for the Channel and then, England. You could not simply come to Britain in those days: you had to prove you had a job – and most of the luckier people who escaped came with a permit as a domestic – or you had to have an affidavit – a legal document from a guarantor promising that you would not be a drain on the state and that the UK would not have to support you. Gerda and Rosi said goodbye as they arrived in England, and Gerda went to Surrey to her employers and Rosi went on to Glasgow, to hers. It is unimaginable now; Gerda was only 19 years old at the time. Of course, neither Rosi nor Gerda knew they would never see their family again. That only became clear after the war, when they learned from the Red Cross and the Jewish Agency that they were the sole survivors of a very large family spread all over Germany. They were both well treated by their families, although of course, there were lots of language difficulties. My aunt had no idea what a jacket potato was and proceeded to pop a potato in all the family's jackets hanging in the cloakroom, and my mother, having received the instruction 'clean AGA', spent the morning trying to catch the family dog, having never heard of an AGA and thinking it must be the dog.

***Hans and Gerda Wiener
with Marion, 1946***



Gerda Schmitz met Hans Wiener at a party in Hampstead. They fell in love and married during the 'black out', when no lights were allowed to be seen and everyone had heavy black curtains over their windows, so that the German bombers would not know if they were over London.

Two years later, after the war, I came along, then after five years, Stephen was born, much to my disgust, having enjoyed being the centre of attention on my own for 5 years. Apparently, having been told that I was to have a little brother or sister, I was disappointed to find it wasn't a playmate, but a rather boring baby and I told my parents to take him back to the hospital after a few days. They didn't. My father told me one day, I would be pleased to have a little brother. Well, Dad, after several decades, you're right! We all lived in a big old rented Victorian house with grandparents, Hedwig and Julius and an Indian tenant, Mr. Deshmook, who introduced my parents to some delicious Indian food. We remained there until 1956, when Gerda, Hans and Marion and Stephen moved to a detached 'Haymills' designed house built in the 1930s, in Hendon, where my parents lived until their deaths – Hans on 29 March 1991 and Gerda on 4 July 2008. My mother, who had actually trained as a bookkeeper, was a housewife and my father, the sales manager of a hosiery firm based in Leicester.



***Rosi and Henry Wolff's wedding,
with Rosi and Gerda wearing
'new look' outfits, 1947***

At that time, Belsize Square Synagogue featured prominently in my childhood. It was the refuge of that remnant of Jewish survivors, lost and confused in the aftermath of the war. Realising they had lost everything, including all or most of their family to the Third Reich, they desperately needed not so much a synagogue, but a community. I was lucky: I had the luxury of one set of grandparents, Hedwig and Julius Wiener, who had survived and were living with us in Glenilla Road, Belsize Park. My first memories of synagogue are when my grandfather, Julius, would take me by the hand on a Saturday morning, dressed in our best, to Buckland Crescent, then at some stage to Eton Avenue, for shabbes morning services. We were led by the rather austere Dr. Salzberger, and the imposing Cantor Davidson, neither of whom spoke much English. I was utterly in awe of them both, although the language was no problem, since I spoke only German too until I went to kindergarten. I am sure they were kindly gentlemen, but to a child, Cantor Davidson looked like a huge black vulture in his cantorial robe, although I did enjoy the sweets he dished out to us children from the cavernous black gown, and Dr. Salzberger was an erudite but very remote figure to a child. I recall going to St. Johns Wood synagogue for Simchat Torah services and to St. Pancras Town Hall for High Holyday services. We were, so to speak, in the tradition of the wandering Jews! There was great rejoicing when we finally acquired the old vicarage from St. Peter's church next door and had our own home. When I am there, I certainly feel the presence of past members I knew in my youth. Having escaped the Nazis, the Belsize founder members who were surviving refugees clung to

each other and forged a vibrant congregation with traditions that live on to this day in us – the children and grandchildren of those founder members. Long may it flourish and prosper.

Being in close walking distance, we used to attend services every Friday and Saturday morning. When I was six, I began Cheder, which we used to call ‘Sunday School’! Indeed, the synagogue wasn’t even kosher in those early days until Rabbi Mariner came and quite rightly introduced kashrus. I became an enthusiastic member of Mrs Bromnick’s popular ‘Junior Club’ for 7-10 year olds, and I joined the children’s choir under the direction of Hanni Lichtenstein and her husband, organist Paul. I made many friends that I have to this day, notably Sue Mariner, nee Schiffer, with whom I sang in the Children’s Choir on Saturday mornings. Of course, we always dressed up for services and Sue and I felt very smart in our fashionable Prince of Wales checked skirts and lilac tricot three-button tops when we were 13 year old teenagers! I loved going to synagogue, although I will now admit to sneaking out during the sermons to chat to my pals instead of catching the pearls of wisdom emanating from the podium. I had a wonderful time in my teenage years, first going to the Phoenix club for 13-17 year olds, which so many of us enjoyed, and then later at 17, to the Chaverim Club, and then on to the Leo Baeck B’Nai Brith for young adults.

5 Glenilla Road Belsize Park family home and Ford Prefect ca. 1948



When we moved to Golders Green, our friends in Belsize Park were very upset, thinking they would have to take a packed lunch on the long journey from NW3 to NW11! My father had fallen ill with ulcerative colitis in 1955. He spent around five months in St. Bartholomew’s Hospital in the City. Stephen was too young to know, but I was very upset indeed. Children under 12 years of age were not allowed into hospitals as visitors. Aware of my distress, our mother said she would take my brother and me to wave to Daddy from the interior courtyard. We waited. Suddenly, a gaunt figure with skeletal fingers appeared at an upstairs window, waving to us. We did not recognise the tubby, well-upholstered Daddy we knew. It made us even more upset.

We had moved with Mummy and Mathilda our maid, into the new house without my father. My mother, a very capable and indeed, formidable lady, managed it all on her own. I recall that the garden in the new house was a complete jungle and Stephen and I earned one penny for every empty bottle we found in the overgrown garden: we did rather well out of it! For my 10th birthday, my father's garage owner, drove Mummy, Stephen and me to Walton-on-the-Naze, to a B&B near the convalescence home in which my father was staying for 6 weeks. I still recall he was allowed out to join us for my birthday tea, and I was given a red woollen cardigan with shiny gilt buttons, and two books: *Black Beauty* and *Lorna Doone*. Daddy eventually came home and so life continued, although we children had to be careful not to annoy our father by being noisy or bickering while he was still recovering and unable to work. He spent his time teaching our newly acquired pet budgie, Timmy, to talk and finger training him. That bird was the tamest bird ever and I was so sad when Timmy went to the great aviary in the sky when I was 13 years old. My grandfather Julius died on May 20th the same year, 1959 and I am still mourning his loss some 60 years later. He was a wonderful man and a great 'Opa', who used to spoil me rotten and give me 'Blue Riband' chocolate with the words: 'Don't tell your grandma!'. My grandma, an accomplished needlewoman having been educated in needlework, singing and piano the manner of all young ladies of good family, kept them financially afloat by doing alterations, turning collars and cuffs of mens' shirts – collars were detachable in those days – making felt flowers for ladies' hats, making belts and darning socks and jumpers. Meanwhile my grandpa did the shopping, mostly in the markets in Warren Street and Queen Street, sometimes taking me along and I noticed with his twinkly blue eyes and good looks, he was a great hit with the ladies at the market stalls! We also had a cat, Peter, a tabby keeping the mice at bay and Opa cooked scraps of whiting for the cat himself. I now wonder how an affluent man of his background managed without a word of complaint and the complete loss of status. I guess after his experience at Dachau, he was just glad to be alive. He never spoke of Dachau and what he saw there, not even to his wife or son. My grandparents had been rather remote parents, and I realised that my father had a more affectionate relationship with his nanny, Augusta, or 'Gustie' as we called her when we met after the war, than he had with his parents.

I attended 'The Holy Trinity' primary school in Hampstead until I was 10. I always came second in class, behind Sylvia Kurzrock, now Morris and she always had first pick of the prize table. One year, to my annoyance, she picked the pencil box I had my eye on. I asked her decades later if she still had it. She laughed. 'Of course not, you silly woman.' Well, Sylvia, I still have 'Fuzzypeg goes to school, the second prize that I chose! I had to leave my primary school in Hampstead, where I had been very happy, moving to 'Wessex Gardens' primary because of the move from Belsize Park to Hendon.

It was not a happy time, and I was bullied by both pupils and teachers. The GLC 11+ exams differed greatly from the Barnet 11+ and I was punished for writing with loops and not the Marion Richardson writing practised in Barnet. In a class of 44, my form teacher hadn't noticed I was new and slapped me across the back of my legs with a ruler until the skin was broken and I was red raw. My mother went to the school to complain. It did no good. The headmistress (as we used to call these people then), would have none of it and implied I had been lying.



***Holy Trinity School 1954
Marion second row from front,
second on the left,
looking to the right***

My mother told her I was a truthful girl and she should look at my legs and see for herself. Next day, in assembly, I heard Mrs Landgrigeon, calling out my name. 'Stand on this chair so that the school can see you. This girl's mother came up to see me yesterday to tell me I was a liar. You will not speak to Marion till lunchtime.' It is amazing I am as normal as I am after that. I was rescued by my lifelong good friend Carole Morris, now Edward, who took me under her wing, and from then on till I left, I was not bullied again. Carole was and is a formidable and very vocal opponent of injustice.

From Wessex Gardens, I passed my 11+ and attended Hendon County Grammar School, passing my 'A' levels in History a year early, then German, English and French and 'S' level German to reach the Institut Francaise, taking the Sorbonne course in 'Civilisation Francaise' consisting of all things French. I had decided that, as I wasn't in the least shy and rather loquacious, a job as an interpreter and being paid for talking would suit me very well. And so I studied German, French and Russian, adding some Italian and Spanish later and even later, specialising in electronics, notably signal processing and satellite communications. It is rather a conversation stopper at social gatherings! I was always the only woman in satellite engineering. I had trouble remembering all the names of the naval officers of several countries whom I trained in satcoms, while they had only me to remember, as I stuck out like a sore thumb. It was at that time that I began my training in serious drinking, as I was put to the alcohol test by colleagues on many occasions and ultimately was able to drink most of them under the table.

My career path began at 21 with a stint working for Compagnie Francaise des Petroles. At this time, I was walking out with a steady boyfriend. I had met Antony Godfrey at a Jewish Club when I was 19 and when I had finished college, we married on 1 October 1967. I continued working for the oil company in London until 1969, when I was about six months pregnant.

Philip James Godfrey, our only child, was born on 26 April 1970.....a most happy day! He weighed 8lbs 1 oz and although when I look at the pictures now, I can see he just looks like, well, a baby, but we thought he was the most beautiful baby in the world. He was a bright boy, but extremely lazy at school. I was shocked when told by his very first primary school teacher that 'Philip is the laziest little boy it has ever been my displeasure to teach!' He went to Orley Farm Prep School.



In the garden at 115 The Vale, Wiener family...note the formal attire



The Vale family home in 1959 with the two-tone grey Vauxhall Velox

, Harrow on the Hill and from there, he continued his rather lacklustre academic career at Mill Hill public school, where he was a weekly boarder, which he loved and which enabled me to continue working as an interpreter at international venues, since my husband was in and out of jobs and I was the main, or at times the only, breadwinner. Somehow, the lad managed to play truant and at parents' evenings, I had a hard time finding someone who even knew who he was and on several occasions, a teacher would commiserate that 'Philip has been so ill this term'. Reports would say something along the lines of: 'Philip is very plausible!' I brought him home for the sixth form, where he could no longer slide down the drainpipe out of his study, go to the local village, buy Chinese food and then sell it to his schoolmates!

Philip was good at sport and tells me he loved school, 'apart from the work.' He has many friends all over the world from those days and he came good in the end with his O and A levels, obtaining a university science degree and is now pursuing a successful career as an osteopath. My friends tell me he is rather good at it, but of course, he is generally too busy to treat me if I

have a problem, as he prefers to treat the fee-paying patients. I can hardly get used to patients emerging from his surgery and calling him 'Mr. Godfrey'. When I used to go to his first surgery on Kingsbury Green to run reception for him after hours when I had come from my own office, I remember thinking 'Oh, is Antony here then?' Wishing to behave professionally, he told me not to tell the patients that I was his mother. One day, a patient came out of Philip's surgery wanting to make another appointment. While I was looking at the computer, he squinted at me. 'Are you Mr. Godfrey's mother?' he asked. 'Certainly not. Whatever gave you that idea?' 'Well, he said go out and see my mother about another appointment.' I went pillar box red and gave my son what for afterwards.

My career then took an unexpected turn and instead of going back to work for another employer after having taken a maternity break, I started my own business, a translation company, later joined by my wonderful business partner, Judy Smith, with whom I worked with never a cross word for 32 year until the company was taken over. The firm grew and grew and soon, my business partner and close friend, Judy Smith nee Ereira - we went from Wiener and Ereira to Godfrey and Smith - and I took offices in Kenton to accommodate all the translators and administrators working with us. I have enjoyed every millisecond of the work for over 50 years. My work has taken me to all the far-flung corners of the world, interpreting and consulting on cross cultural issues and language problems and meeting some fascinating people.

After 22 years, Antony and I decided to split up, although we have remained on good terms and until this day, neither of us has married again. Friends often tell us we should write a book on 'The Good Divorce'. Little do they know that every time we see each other, we remember why we are divorced! However, an amicable relationship with a person I was fond enough to have a child with is so much better for our son and all our friends, who know us both and are aware that we are quite happy to meet and even sit together at their family celebrations.

About a year after my divorce, I met a German journalist, Michael. I had been translating his pieces for various publications for emap, the Mirror Group owned by Maxwell. We met and although I didn't think further than an evening having dinner, we fell in love almost immediately and I spent the next seventeen years with him. We had two flats, one in London and one in Frankfurt and we had some wonderful times travelling all over the world, sometimes on business, sometimes for pleasure. Michael opened up the world of the visual arts for me and was very knowledgeable on architecture, painting, sculpture and literature. I owe him much. I opened up the world of theatre and music for him, which he, a recovering Trotskyite, had previously sneered at as 'bourgeois entertainment' and I also gave him a family life here in London, and so for 17 years, we had a good life together. He was intellectually challenging, which I liked, and the other benefit was that he had a daughter, Katherina, aged 8 when we met, a lovely girl with whom I am still on very good terms (and with her mother and aunt), even though I split from his father due to his alcoholism ten years ago, when Katherina was 25. I was very sad indeed at the breakdown of this

relationship and I am still feeling bereft more than a decade later. However, I am blessed by wonderfully supportive and loving friends and my family, consisting of my son and his gorgeous wife, two super bright, beautiful, accomplished, uniquely gifted, affectionate and clever Jewish grandchildren, Alex (17) and Isabel (Izzy, 15) my brother Stephen and his wife Melanie and my lovely niece and nephew, Caroline and David, both of whom who are married, Caroline to a Frenchman and they now have 6 year old twins and a 12 year old, all of whom are bilingual, and David and now Jenny, his wife is just expecting their first child in August this year, 2020.



The family now

We were absolutely thrilled when Philip married Laura Rosenblatt on 13 July 1997. Having a very small family and growing up with no cousins, I was delighted to acquire the large Rosenblatt family too. Then, to complete our joy, along came Alex and Isabel. The children and I have spent a great deal of time together, and I have tried to help with their education by instilling a love of art, the joy of reading, the wonderful city of London in which they live, skills such as riding and I have taken them chocolate making in Brussels, to Paris to eat escargots and see the sights, riding every year in the New Forest (they are good riders, unlike their grandma, who sits uncomfortably bumping along on some poor pony, shouting: ‘Haven’t you got a lower horse – this one’s too high!’) and I have taken them to New York, Washington, Chicago and to my great joy, they joined me in South Africa, where they stayed in Cape Town’s beautiful Camps Bay before going on an exciting safari with me at Botlierskop. I generally spend a couple of months in Africa in winter, to escape the horrid weather at home, although this year, 2020, I was unable to go and now, of course, we are all bunkered in isolation at home, due to the coronavirus pandemic.

I am so lucky that Philip, Laura and the children live about five minutes' walk through Sunny Hill Park away from me. Now that Alex and Izzy are teenagers, I don't see them as much, but we do have Friday nights together and now that Alex is driving, he pops over often and they both keep in touch with me on a regular basis. Alex wants to be a commercial pilot and is already well on the way to gaining his light aircraft licence (he also passed his driving test first time after just 10 lessons around 8 weeks after his 17th birthday and his parents have now given him a car, (the lucky boy)), while Izzy has enjoyed work experience at our local vet's surgery and is hoping to train as a veterinary nurse. Both of them are focused and although Philip complains that they are answering back and being typical teenage horrors, they are actually not difficult kids. I have to smile to myself when I recall Philip's teenage years.....which he conveniently appears to have forgotten, portraying himself to his own children as Little Mr. Perfect. Not bloody likely!

I have been attempting to retire for about twelve years now, but without much success. I sold the first two companies rather well, and then started yet another translation house with my ex-husband. We recently gave up the office and now, everyone works remotely on cloud and that is a really good solution. Not only do we save the cost of the rental and everything associated with it, but these days, clients communicate by email, rather than actually coming into the office, impractical anyway, as around 80% of our sales are generated in the euro zone. We await with trepidation how the withdrawal from the European Union will impact our business. The decision has proved to be very timely, given the complete lockdown we are all now in due to the coronavirus pandemic. Life is not easy, with just me and the cat, Bing, who isn't particularly conversational and is no good at all at playing cards. Let us hope this will pass as quickly as possible and that there will be a serum within a year to help humanity to gain some sort of hold on the currently collapsing global economy. Many, including my son and daughter in law, both osteopaths in private practice, are currently on zero income and very worried indeed. We shall have to see whether the government will help the self-employed and extend the special and unprecedented measures to help the employed and the employers at this uniquely difficult time. This crisis is bringing out the very worst and the very best of humanity.

I have so many wonderful friends supporting me at every stage in my life. I hope I have been equally good to them and to my family and that I am going through life doing as little damage as possible.

I have so far had the privilege of watching my son grow, both in age and stature, and been thrilled at his marriage to my best of all daughters in law and I have also had the luck to watch my grandchildren, both adopted at respectively 1 and nearly 2 years of age from an orphanage in

Russia, growing into human beings to be proud of. All we can do is to bring up our children as best we can and hope they turn into people of integrity, honour and kindness. And that, I feel I have done.

Despite having asthma, Crohn's colitis and being obese and not terribly fit, I feel absolutely fine, have more energy than most people half my age and I intend to stick around for long enough to become a problem for my son! I shall probably never retire and as they lower me into the coffin, I shall most likely still be clutching my laptop and carrying out a translation. The rest, as they say, is history.....or it will be if I have my way!

...and the overlapping story by brother Stephen W follows.....



My Story

by

Stephen W



Stephen Julian Wiener

I was born at the end of 1950 on the auspicious calendar date of 25 December. As I was the only Christmas baby born in the nursing home, I was kidnapped into performing the starring role of baby Jesus in the Maternity Home's nativity play – a Jewish Jesus which you must agree, was completely in keeping with history. In later life, after the age of 0, I have been unable to follow up on the early promise of a career as a thespian.

December 25 also marked the Birthday of my mother, Gerda Wiener (née Schmitz) some years earlier. As a consequence, I managed to avoid the inconvenience of having birthday parties for many years from childhood into adulthood, as it was "my mother's birthday", not mine, which was celebrated every Christmas until my mother's death in 2008.

My father, Edgar Hans Wiener, managed to contract mumps from my elder sister, Marion, five years old at the time I was born, and wasn't allowed to see my mother or me until after we were discharged some 4 weeks later from the Queen Mary's Maternity Home, Hampstead Heath – I always say that I was born "on The Heath"!

Once discharged, I was transported to our family home, a large Victorian rented 3-floor terraced-house with basement-cellar, at 5 Glenilla Road, Belsize Park where we lived on the first and second floors above my grandparents, Julius (that's where my middle name came from) and Hedwig Wiener, who lived on the ground-floor until I was 5 years old and we moved to the delights of 115 The Vale, Golders Green. My parents had arrived in England separately, not having been acquainted before emigration from Germany. My father had lived in Offenbach-am-Main (near Frankfurt-am-Main) and my mother in Bonn - which at the time was a sleepy little university town and after the war was enlisted to be an uncontroversial choice as the capital city of W. Germany until the reunification of Germany re-appointed Berlin to that status.

My mother grew up in Bonn and lived with her parents, Wilhelm Schmitz and Karoline Schmitz (née Neumann) and her younger and much beloved brother, Bruno and her half-sister, Rosi, child of Wilhelm's first deceased wife, in the Bonngasse, a street in the town-centre of Bonn with a garden overlooking the garden of the birth-house of Ludwig von Beethoven (b. 1770) – so that when my mother and her brother inadvertently threw their ball into Beethoven's garden and they went round to the front of the house to ask "Mr. Beethoven" for it to be given back, the Curator of the Beethoven Museum established at the house was not well pleased! Gerda's father, Wilhelm was a shoemaker and the workshop as well as the retail shop were on site. He had married Karoline – his second wife, after his first wife died in childbirth having provided 4 children to the family before she died.

Gerda did not stay in the family home for too long, she was an excellent student and destined for higher education which, naturally, the nazification of Germany put paid to. She ventured further afield to Berlin, where she had taken a bookkeeping course and got herself a job and a boyfriend – a student Doctor who decided his destiny lay with Gerda abroad – away from the Nazis, so that he had applied for a visa for emigration to the USA where he could complete his medical studies and go into practice. Shortly before the war started, on the 15 March 1939, Gerda aged 19, said a tearful farewell to her Bonn

family and left Germany for England with her older half-sister, Rosi, having obtained the required visas and guarantees as “domestic-staff” for British families – the only way which young ladies were able to land in the UK. Gerda went to Boxhill in Surrey to a traditional country-house with numerous servants of which she was one scullery-maid. She recounted to us, that on her first day at the big house, there were instructions for her and the other “new” maid for their first duties. Gerda read “Clean AGA” as one of her first duties. She remarked to her friend and compatriot how she hated dogs and had no idea how to clean them. It was a rude awakening but some relief to her to learn that AGA was indeed a range-cooker!

My father, Edgar Hans – but usually known as Hans – was born to a wealthy family in Offenbach on 1 April 1914 to his father, Julius Wiener and mother, Hedwig Wiener (née Stern). They lived in relative prosperity with a chauffeur and nanny whilst my grandfather tended to the business which was in the form of owning two department stores – one in Offenbach and one in Frankfurt under the name of Wronka. They took summer holidays in Italy and skiing holidays in Engelberg, Switzerland. I always remember my father explaining that he was one of the few boys who learned to drive whilst still in Germany, as the chauffeur used to take him out for lessons in the family limousine into the local private woods. His father Julius was furious when he discovered my father could drive: ‘Why do you do that? We have a chauffeur to do that sort of thing!’ When my father came to England, the driving-licence he had obtained stood him in good stead, as he was able to put it to use driving an ambulance during the war after having been discharged (for medical reasons) from the Pioneer Corps of the British Army (something quite strange, as my father had a fear of blood and would tend to faint on the sight of it! While he was the driver, his friend was the stretcher bearer and he would also tend to pass out at the sight of blood, so goodness only knows if they actually managed any useful rescue operations).

I’m afraid that much of the history of my Family in Germany is not known by me – my parents rarely talked about their lives and escape from the Nazis although my older Sister, Marion Godfrey (née Wiener) has a much broader (and no doubt more accurate) knowledge of our family history than I have. I am aware, that much of my mother’s family - including her mother and father, were arrested and transported to Theresienstadt, where Wilhelm died, as the Nazis stated, of “natural causes”, so presumably, of typhoid or similar. Karoline died just before the rise of the Third Reich, possibly of complications as a result of an abortion, although we don’t know this for sure, and there is a grave in the re-consecrated Jewish cemetery in Bonn alongside that of my aunt Rosi’s mother, Wilhelm’s first wife. The remainder of a very large family spread from the Bonn and Vallendar in the Rhineland to small village in Bavaria and Franconia, where they were cattle breeders and traders (and in fact, my mother’s great uncle was a mohel), all died in Auschwitz and other death camps. Gerda’s most beloved brother Bruno, who was at a seminary in Würzburg, Bavaria, training as a Cantor, escaped from Germany to a farm in Denmark in preparation for emigrating to what was then Palestine, however, despite the Danish royals allegedly wearing a Magen David armband, when the Nazis marched in, things got very bad and he and eight friends, including the farmer, who had a Jewish wife, and Bruno’s girlfriend, took a rowing boat aiming for Sweden, but capsized on the way and died. Only three out of the nine were saved by the Swedish coastguard and the son of one of them has written a book about the nine occupants of the

boat. Unfortunately, we only discovered this a couple of years ago by chance and so mother and Rosi never really found out what happened to Bruno. There is a memorial at the Jewish cemetery in Malmo to those who died in the attempt to reach Sweden.

I know that my father, rather than joining his father's business, followed the "usual" path for a son to "do an apprenticeship" elsewhere before being brought into the family business. Hans was no exception and he went and joined a cousin's business in Luxembourg as a trainee. My father, who shrewdly recognised when things in Germany had begun to take a turn for the worst with the introduction of the Nuremburg race laws in 1937, decided to emigrate to England, a move much resented by his parents, especially his father, who walked around wearing the iron cross he had been awarded in WW1, thinking he would be safe. The prospect of his only son leaving Germany and not taking over the two department stores was not appreciated by Julius Wiener. Father rented accommodation in Hampstead (Glenloch Road) which was full of bed-sits for single people – especially refugees from Germany, who for some reason had chosen to live in Belsize Park, rather than the traditional émigré home in London's East End – a choice much resented by the so-called 'English Jews', who did not welcome their fellow Jewish refugees, saying they had 'brought it on themselves' by assimilating and who felt that the refugees were snobbish and arrogant in their refusal to settle in the East End. Hans settled in Hampstead and tried to persuade his parents to join him in England to no avail. My Grandfather, Julius, had kept the businesses open and foolishly, due to rampant inflation and afterwards the removal of all businesses from Jews, lost all income. Despite this, he told my father, that "....as a friend of the Mayor of Offenbach and the Police Chief" he had nothing to fear! Julius was arrested and taken to Dachau Concentration Camp on Kristallnacht in 1938. By some devious method, Hans was able to buy Julius out of Dachau and managed to arrange for him, Hedwig and some of their possessions to be shipped to England, under an affidavit provided by a distant English relative, Julius Oppenheimer, who gave the affidavit unwillingly despite being fabulously wealthy, without which, they would not have been granted immigration rights to England. Grandpa Julius never spoke about what he saw and experienced in Dachau to his dying day. Not even to his wife.

Once the Wiener seniors had arrived in Hampstead and my father had secured a job as a cellarman for the wine Importers, Hallgarten, however, my father felt the need to "...do something for his adopted country..." and so he volunteered for the British Army – who accepted him into the Pioneer Corps as a lowly private (when my sister learned about army ranks at school, she once asked our dad what rank he had held and was very disappointed, thinking he had been at least a general, but Hans replied: 'Ah, but I was a very good private!'), with a great many other refugees from Austria and Germany, all 'schpeaking mit ze accent'. This also meant that he saved his parents (and himself) from being interned in one of the camps set up by the British, notably on the Isle of Man and other places, since refugees from Germany were classified 'enemy aliens' notwithstanding that they had escaped certain death. Dad never really spoke much of his experiences in the army, except for a few words about having to clean out the latrines in the staging-post of the Kitchener Camp for the Australian or maybe Canadian Lumberjack soldiers who had joined the War effort in the UK. Dad was trained in Westward Ho, Cambridge, Derbyshire and at army bases all over the place. The one recollection of an incident which occurred during my father's truncated stay in the Pioneer Corps, was him receiving a weekend pass to travel home to visit the family

together with his friends Horst Kley, Poldi Lister and Pepi Elkins, ending up being guarded by armed men in a local hospital ward having been involved in a road-traffic accident and seriously injured to the extent that he required hospitalisation. Apparently, he had been muttering in German....and this, together with the little markings he had made on the maps in his 'Letts businessman's diary' led the locals in Derbyshire to believe he was one of Hitler's first paratroopers!

When he regained consciousness, he saw the armed guards encircling his hospital-bed and tried, in his still quite limited English, to say that he was a British soldier (indeed he was wearing his Uniform) on his way "home". The authorities took this as meaning that he was a Nazi spy and only after some lengthy discussions with the Army and Hans, Pepi and Horst's commanding officer, another refugee who spoke with a thick German accent, did they accept that these "enemy aliens" were not spies and indeed were members of the British Army.

During the rest of the war, Hans was soon discharged for medical reasons from the Army, although he had, apparently only visited the Medical Officer to obtain permission to be "excused boots" on parade on account of his chronic flat-feet! He returned to Hampstead and enquired if there was some other suitable service, he could offer the country during the war. That was how he was recruited as an ambulance driver (as previously recounted) for the ARP. My grandfather, Julius, spent much of the war at home or walking the streets of neighbouring Camden, avoiding the call of the police who were regularly looking for Jewish refugees to intern at the various camps established throughout England for "alien refugees". In fact, one day when Dad was home on leave, but still in army uniform, the police came, but he asked them whether they really were going to intern someone whose son was in the British army and they reluctantly agreed to leave our grandparents exactly where they were for the duration of the war. Rumour had it, that grandfather, Julius, spent a lot of time in Camden's Church Street Market, searching for more familiar meat cuts to bring home for my grandmother and mother, excellent cooks who pooled their ration cards, to cook "continental-style" not being well versed in such peculiarly British delicacies as corned beef fritters, spam rissoles, bangers and mash, tripe and onions or any other British specialities available during the strict rationing of wartime.

Gerda worked, partly doing war-work in a munitions' factory in Camden, where she did her best to inadvertently sabotage the aircraft she was working on and indeed, got through hundreds of drill bits in her technical ineptitude, and my grandmother, Hedwig, found her forte in using her adeptness as a seamstress and tailor in re-modelling clothes for people, darning socks, doing alterations of all sorts and earning a little money for the family's keep. She had, naturally, learned sewing, embroidery, petit-point as a well-heeled young socialite in Offenbach, rather than learning the more mundane occupations for "working women" of the generation. Meanwhile, Gerda and Hans had met at a party held in her sister Rosi's bedsit in Glenloch Road and fallen for each other. Dad was very taken with the beautiful Gerda, and 'accidentally' left his torch at the party, so that next day, he rang and asked if he could collect it. My mother agreed. He went there and seeing mum wearing a pretty dress, suggested that 'Well, I'm here now, why don't we go tea dancing at the Trocadero?' The rest, as they say, is history. My mother's previous boyfriend, Otto, had left for USA and was not heard of for many years until he himself had married and established himself as a doctor. Gerda and Hans were married under the auspices of Rabbi

Dr. Munk in what was, for the wartime, a singularly lavish affair put on by friends who lived in a beautiful flat (with an internal lift and spiral stairs) at High Point in Highgate. How my father was able to persuade Dr. Munk of his religious qualifications to be married in Orthodoxy, is a puzzlement, as the considerable Jewish population of Frankfurt-am-Main and Offenbach were not known for their highly observant Jewish upbringing! My mother was told she had to go to a mikvah on her wedding day, but she lied about going, being unwilling to spoil her carefully coiffed hair by immersing herself! Luckily, Rabbi Munk accepted her assurance that she had indeed been well immersed!

Gerda and Hans established their home at 5 Glenilla Road, Hampstead, NW3 on the first and second floors (having let one of the rooms on the second floor to an Indian tenant, Mr. Deshmuk, who introduced our parents to Indian cuisine, whilst Oma and Opa Wiener lived on the Ground Floor (Hampstead.....but with an outside toilet). In 1946, my Sister, Marion, was born at the General Lying In Hospital in Lambeth (a true Cockney – except that the Bow bells had been silenced during the war and were still not ringing), the other hospitals still being evacuated out of London. The family, meanwhile, had established a circle of like-minded friends centred around Belsize Park and Finchley Road where many German refugees had established themselves. They had many familiar facilities; coffee houses (Dorice, Cosmo), A Refugee Club, Restaurants (Cosmo, Dorice), Shops (John Barnes) and delicatessens (Polish Ken and Marie in Fairhazel Gardens, Panzer in St. John's Wood, Schmitz in Charlotte Street and Church's in Belsize Village), a German-speaking GP, and a German speaking dentist.

Last but not least, a Synagogue of the German "Liberale" style movement. Established as The New Liberal Synagogue with great assistance from Lily Montague, they had found firstly a house in Buckland Crescent, then in Eton Avenue and a final resting place, which still exists to this day, at what had been the vicarage of St. Peters Parish Church, 51 Belsize Square. The front room of which was converted into a Synagogue Hall, whilst the rest of the building housed Cheder classrooms, general offices, the Rabbi's office and on the top floor the Callaghan Family, our Caretakers for many years. The Rabbi, Dr. Salzburger originally from Frankfurt-am-Main and Chazan. Cantor Dr. Davidson from Berlin guided this small family shul into a thriving community steeped in the Deutsche Liberale liturgy and siddur and aided by the music of Lewandowski and Sulzer with a mixed choir led for many years by Charles Kuttner and later his son Henry Kuttner, with organist Paul Lichtenstein on the harmonium and his star soprano wife, Hanni Lichtenstein leading the quickly established children's choir. The small harmonium which accompanied the choir for many years was played by a non-Jewish church-organist known as Mr. Platford, and it is a puzzlement to me how he learned so expertly to follow a service in a language he could have absolutely no knowledge of – and here I mean a mixture of Hebrew and German!

The post-war years led to Hans joining a hosiery manufacturing company manufacturing mainly men's socks in Leicester, first as a commercial traveller for London and the South coast, later rising to the dizzy heights of Sales Manager and then Sales Director. Gerda, apart from tending to the baby, Marion, with some help from Oma and Opa on the babysitting front, also established a small pop-up shop inside a shoe repairers shop in Belsize Village (must have been home-from-home for her) selling and repairing ladders at six pence per 'run' in stockings (still in short supply due to the shortage of silk and nylon) and hosiery, partly sourced by husband, Hans, . Oma Hedwig continued her tailoring from her treadle-

operated singer sewing-machine which occupied pride-of-place for many years in Glenilla Road and afterwards in The Vale once Opa Julius had passed on in 1958. Marion learned German as her mother-tongue and it was only when her favourite occupation of scooting around the house on her potty came to grief, that she fell down the stairs and broke her arm in multiple places, having to be shipped off to the local Hampstead General Hospital, that after a couple of weeks in plaster and stuck in the hospital, she came back home speaking fluent English. She was sent to a private kindergarten in Lyndhurst Gardens, Miss Watson's, and made her academic way from there to Holy Trinity Primary, Netherhall Gardens and on to Wessex Gardens in 1955 for her final year in Primary school. From there, she excelled at Hendon County School with "O" and "A" levels and progressed to the Lycée français de Londres, in Kensington where she added fluent French to her linguistic abilities, having also learned Russian at "A" level at night school. Hardly surprising that languages became the source of her living.

Meanwhile, in 1950, I arrived, as previously stated, on 25th December, nearly 4 weeks premature. My arrival, so the story goes, was accelerated by my highly pregnant mother, Gerda, having tripped over a dressing table stool the night before. Aunt Rosi and her husband, Uncle Henry, made a birthday party for Gerda at their home at 58 Greencroft Gardens. Half way through the main course, Gerda blurted out: 'Rosi, if you want me to try your birthday cake, you better serve it NOW because I'm having a baby!'. Daddy drove her to the nursing home and hey presto! Two hours later I arrived, much to the surprise of my father, who told the staff 'my wife takes a long time with these things. I waited 48 hours for our daughter' and promptly came back to Rosi and Henry. Just as he was sitting down to a cuppa, the phone rang and it was a nurse ringing to say he had a son. Upon arrival, apart from my thespian entrance, I spent a while at the Maternity home until my quarantined father and sister were released from their mumps restrictions. My earliest recollection of Glenilla Road, is sitting at our Kitchen table on the first floor, overlooking the handkerchief-sized garden and watching the children from opposite, Tudor Court, playing on their bikes and me being forced to eat my peas by my mother, ..."open wide.....driving the train into the tunnel."

I have very few recollections of my time at Glenilla Road, except for the smell of the paraffin-heaters which my father had to fill every day (central heating was a distant dream) and the old anthracite stove which my Opa had to empty and fill with coal from the cellar every day to keep the water hot. I also remember the intense cold of the outside toilet in my grandparent's flat and of course, I do remember Opa's tabby cat, "Peter". In truth there were several Peters - Mark 1 to probably about Mark 3...my father was very good at disposing of one Peter and arranging for a new, similarly marked Peter to be placed in an appropriate place in Glenilla road, so that my grandfather didn't notice.....or did he? It seems hardly likely that he didn't, but I never knew. The house in Glenilla Road was bought after the war by my parents and grandparents, partly from the restitution payments which my father was able to negotiate with the German Government and his "expensive" lawyer, Herr Teuerkauf! Hans became a very skilled negotiator for restitution, so that he was often used by friends and acquaintances to obtain their settlements for them. When others were reading novels, my father was busy reading the German 'Schlussgesetze' – laws on restitution – well into the night. Having fired the expensive Mr. Teuerkauf, he represented my grandfather at the tribunal in Darmstadt, then the administrative capital of Hesse. On arrival at court, a clerk looked him and grandpa over: 'Is this your father for whom you're claiming

‘Gesundheitsschaden’ (damage to health)? ‘Yes, this is my father’. ‘Well, he doesn’t look very ill to me.’ My father went into court and repeated what had been said and the judge immediately rubber stamped the application as passed, embarrassed that not all the Nazis had been de-nazified in operation paperclip and similar processes.

I cannot remember Belsize Square Synagogue until I was around 5 years old, when I do recall our annual journeys, accompanied by at least one uniformed Police Officer from the Odeon Belsize Park (or was it the Odeon Swiss Cottage by then?) back and forth between Belsize Square where we held the Children’s Services for the High Holydays every year. That was an adventure for us. By then it was Rabbi Jacob J. Kokotek and Rev. Joseph Dollinger who led the services. No children’s utterances were tolerated, no late entry to the service, absolute decorum was observed – quite an alien atmosphere for a 5 year old you might agree. Not the most welcoming atmosphere.

My fifth birthday, 25.12.1955, was “celebrated” (well actually the celebration, as I’ve already said, was for my mother’s birthday), in our new house at 115 The Vale, NW11 – we said it was Golders Green, but strictly although we were in NW11 (just!) the 4 bedded detached house with garage stood on the Cricklewood side of The Vale, but that was what you might call snob value. Marion and I shared bedroom number 2, and my father used bedroom number 3 as his “office” and bedroom number 4 was for the au Pair, Mathilde (well really, she and her predecessors, Maria and Marlene, were maids, not au pairs). Marlene, whom we had “met” in Austria on one of our joyous annual motoring holidays in the Tyrol, came for a year and, like all our maids, stayed for several when they realised the freedom and big city lifestyle they could enjoy away from their rather rural living in the backwaters of their Austrian or German homes. The maids worked hard at looking after Marion and myself with cleaning, school-runs and babysitting in exchange for bed and board. In fairness, apart from the work, my parents treated them very well (as one of the family) which is why they stayed much longer than planned. Marlene later went on to manage a hotel on the back of the language skills she had acquired with us and Mathilde, who stayed four years, went back to marry and have two children. My father looked after Mathilde for the rest of his life and as he had ‘stamped’ for her, she drew a UK pension for the rest of hers. I had transferred quite happily from Holy Trinity School to Wessex Gardens Junior, whereas Marion had problems due to her being transferred in her last year of primary-school and the poor fit of the Hampstead and Hendon educational systems (11-Plus). Marion made it to Hendon County and she excelled there in not just the academic achievements, but socially having what I believe was a really good time. She is a witness to that, as even today she is still able to organise reunions of her classmates and even some teachers annually, whereas my memories of my secondary school time at Christ’s College Finchley have all but vanished.

The next milestone, came when Opa Julius died at the age of 82 in 1958. I had not developed a close relationship to Opa – the apple of his eye was Marion (always did have an eye for the women did Opa Julius!). I can recall he was taken to the Hampstead General and a huge fuss when at night he was in some kind of delirium and my father had been called in as he was shouting through the ward in German...which nobody understood. What I do remember is not being allowed to attend the cremation but that my grandmother, Hedwig was greatly upset and as a result my father persuaded her to go on a long visit to her brother, Paul Stern, who had carved out a comfortable life for himself (he remained a

bachelor, having been jilted at the last moment – although he did have a long-term lady friend) in New York City. Whilst Oma went to New York, my father found that a house similar to ours had been put on sale 4 doors down from our house in The Vale at number 123 The Vale and so he put in a bid and won the house, bought it for my grandmother, moved all the furniture and fully equipped it so that when my grandmother returned, she was able to start a completely new life but in close proximity to us. This had advantages and disadvantages, as by then I think my mother would become resentful of the care and attention that Oma received from Hans, resulting in some “friction” in their relationship. For us children, we found it great to have Oma living so close. A haven of chocolate and peanuts and biscuits whenever we visited – and when we found the hiding place for the goodies in one of Oma’s precious porcelain containers even more attractive to us. She never said she’d noticed that her supply diminished every time we visited. Marion and I often spent Sunday afternoons at Oma’s after a sumptuous Sunday Lunch – she was an excellent cook – we would sit down on her sofa and listen to the Sunday afternoon Light Programme delights of Billy Cotton, Jimmy Clitheroe, Ted Ray, The Navy Lark and others, often followed by a game of Canasta with Oma, which she really enjoyed until we started to win (she was, as are all the Wiener family, highly competitive and not a very magnanimous loser at anything, although my sister claims she is not in the same mould and doesn’t mind losing at games).

It was my pleasure, that in later years, I was able to drive my grandmother to her weekly Canasta round where 4 elderly ladies played endlessly – she was the youngest at the age of 84!

My early time at Wessex Gardens was marked by my father’s illness, when he became seriously ill with Ulcerative Colitis. He spent months in Barts hospital and a further 6 weeks in convalescence at Walton-on-the-Naze and from that day suffered with regular debilitating bouts of Ulcerative Colitis linked with depressions. We were driven to visit him in the convalescence home by my father’s garage chap for my sister’s 10th birthday. He was a shadow of his former burly self, but he slowly recovered from this bout and we resumed our lives, I at Wessex Gardens making my way with my favourite teacher, Mrs. Soloway and Marion with her active time at Hendon County. In my 11+ year at Wessex Gardens the system changed. The Borough of Barnet came into being and the 11+ exam was withdrawn and in its place was a series of weekly or monthly tests. My parents had decided that I must get into a Grammar School and chose a very Jewish school – Christs College Finchley (well it did have 50%+ Jewish boys on its role) I think they felt that my sister’s success at Hendon County might lead me to be overshadowed by expectations of another Wiener and also thought a single-gender school would benefit me at that stage. So, with a lot of expert tuition and help from Mr. Carter – my Form Teacher at Wessex Gardens, I found myself at Christs College with just 3 other boys of my acquaintance- luckily, they were also Belsize Square Members, so we had a natural friendship.

By this time, I had joined the Cheder and progressed through the years and followed my sister into the Children’s Choir under the leadership of Hanni Lichtenstein and her husband, Paul, (still playing the harmonium with a squeaky pedal) by then. I had a pretty good boy soprano voice and was frequently called upon to sing solos in services and assemblies. I certainly enjoyed music more than Hebrew lessons so thrived in the choir. The Cheder had grown, now run by Dr. Tausz. I was not greatly enamoured of synagogue services until such time as I was able to follow the services in Hebrew in the siddur – and especially the high holydays were a mystery for me, as my parents never made available a

suitable prayer-book which followed the Belsize Square service – so I had to skip many pages and find the place very often. Losing concentration, usually meant losing my place in the service for a while! Socially, I was forced to attend the “Youth Group”, the Phoenix, at Belsize Square on Saturday Evenings – where, unlike my sister, I became the regular wall flower. The leaders were significantly older and more experienced than I was and I felt totally out of place there for at least a year. Then suddenly, they were gone and I had my 3 friends from school and others who joined. Soon we had a thriving club – renamed it to 67 Group and recruited many teens from outside of Belsize Square families. Rabbi Kokotek was not well pleased by this, but the club thrived and I became its treasurer and publicity officer – learned how to construct newsletters, used the duplicator (courtesy of David Horwell) and became interested in sound and lighting systems for amateur dramatics. All of these bits of knowledge and experience have stood me in very good stead for many years. Supplemented on the sound side, by a great mentor, Henry Kuttner of BBC Radio Studio Engineering fame.

My progression through teenage was not without its bumps in the road. Relationships with my sister typically degraded – she thought I was her “little brother” I thought she was bossy and didn’t want to play any of my games any more. She bears the scar of one of those incidents, where I threw a screwdriver (inadvertently?) in her direction at one stage, and she ran into our parents with the blade sticking out of her thigh, pointing to it “...he did that”. Luckily not much blood was spilt. Nowadays Marion and I get on rather well. We talk together and have, in many respects, the same outlook on life – such teenage arguments as there were, are a memory and I know if I’m in real need she’ll be there for me just as I’m here for her!

Aged 14, I developed some serious health problems, which, as was the custom, were studiously ignored for about 6 month by Gerda – her attitude was...”if you don’t have a temperature of 101 and at least one limb dropping off, you’re not ill...you will go to school....” Well, the illness I developed persisted and eventually, with my father’s history of Colitis in mind, I was referred for tests and Crohn’s Disease was diagnosed, at a time when it was still relatively unknown. Professor Crohn was still alive (died 1983) in New York City and the General Physician Consultant, Sir Harold Davies, at the Hampstead General came to the conclusion after numerous heinous tests, that this was what I had. I cannot forget the tear-stained face my mother had, when she asked what does it all mean and was told “where there’s life, there’s hope” by the consultant there. (My sister always complains that mum came home and said that if anything happened to me, she would kill herself, to which my sister replied: ‘So I’m not worth carrying on for?’) After a spell in hospital and a dramatic reduction in weight (I had been quite podgy), I was now a skeleton, but with an appetite of an elephant restored. That was the first bout of Crohn’s which cost me a year at school and my “O” level exams were a dead loss. Then about 18 months later, the same problems started again, this time another bout in hospital proved unhelpful and I was discharged. My parents sought alternative help and found Richard D. Tonkin a wonderful kind and knowledgeable gastroenterologist at The Gordon Hospital, Victoria (belonging to the Westminster Hospital) who took me in and was able to get me well. There have been several other periods of Crohn’s illness some with hospital stays, some with horrible diets and some with operations, but in the main I have navigated my way through them and gained a huge encyclopaedia of knowledge about Crohn’s which I hope I am able to impart on new “Chronies” to calm their fears.

Hans Wiener died in 1993 – unfortunately his stomach cancer lay undetected despite the brilliant brains of numerous specialists at St. Marks Hospital and Harley Street. His epitaph is “I TOLD you this was different to my normal Colitis” (in his heavy German accent which he NEVER lost) and he was right, but nobody was able to detect it until too late. I miss him, awfully every day. He was my mentor and I could talk to him about anything. I learned so much from him. He had continued to work for the Hosiery Company (Tresco Hosiery Limited) which had its main manufacturing centre in Leicester – supplemented later by imports of men’s knitwear. He fiercely held on to his job as Sales Director, although in later years he restricted his travelling to S. England and chose his business-journeys carefully to coincide with school holidays and mainly selected resorts on the seaside of the East and South Coasts to enable him to combine work with rest for members of the family. Although officially retiring at the age of 50, after his friend, the owner of the factory, Mr. Travers né Tremesberger, had died, he never really retired from his job and kept regular contact with his numerous business friends well past retirement age. Hans and Gerda had continued to own 5 Glenilla Road and rented it out as 7 or 8 flats and bedsits. Both Gerda and Hans spent quite a lot of time administering to their numerous tenants wants and needs with a succession of requests for heaters, cookers, new carpets, beds, replacement keys etc. which they duly satisfied – they were perfect landlords, always fair in the rents they charged and in the services they provided.

Gerda survived Hans by 14 years until her 91st year despite some serious illness later in life and even on her 90th Birthday we celebrated on Christmas Day with a lunch party for our relatives and her friends. Although working for a living was not usual for my mother, she supplemented my father’s weekly “housekeeping” cash handout by occasional forays to work. Mainly these did not last long – I recall one job, where she became a receptionist in a Kitchen Design studio in Hendon. This lasted for a relatively short while, until a “customer” distracted her and an accomplice stole her handbag complete with all contents from the shop. Apart from looking after the cleaning and renovation of rooms between tenants at Glenilla Road, my mother also volunteered at the B’nai B’rith Leo Baeck Lodge’s Day Centre in Daleham Gardens, where she revelled in cooking “continental style” for the many members who came to be entertained and dined every Thursday. She continued cooking for the over 60s well into her eighties! Cooking was a great forte of Gerda. She cooked and baked really well and despite many problems with my father’s and my diet (due to Crohn’s and Colitis restrictions on fibres), she always provided wholesome and tasty meals, even when these were the traditional German “Aufschnitt” sandwiches (cold meat cuts) on Saturday and Sunday evenings before Marion and later on me were on our way to the youth groups at the Synagogue. “Becky” our cleaning-lady and family retainer for many years of my childhood was a superb qualified pastry cook, having been married to the erstwhile Armenian ambassador before the country was conquered by the Turks and virtually disappeared and was able to teach my mother the delights of “Charlotte Russe” and many other memorable desserts and cakes fit for a royal table.

Maybe as a result of my mother’s early life under the Nazis and then the English aristocracy in Surrey, Gerda was not good at dealing with illness. She always considered herself the “strongest” member of the family – never ill, never missing a day of her duties (with the exception of persistent back problems – sometimes spending weeks flat on her back on a board) or for the regular bouts of projectile vomiting

which was caused by gall-bladder problems over many years. Indeed, we believed that she single-handedly kept the “Rennies” factory running, as there was hardly a moment when she wasn’t chewing Rennies to still her heartburn.

I haven’t spent any time explaining my progress from school, to college and marriage, so this has to be put right. At Christs College I did not excel academically. In no way was I comparable to my sister in exam qualifications and despite the excuse of many months in hospital and convalescence in both “O” level and retakes (a year later) of most of my “O” levels, (having spent an extra year in the 5th Form to repeat the year), I did not achieve stardom. My dreams of becoming a Medical Doctor foundered, when my Headmaster, Keith James, at Christs College suggested to my parents, that I should concentrate on subjects in which I had a natural advantage – that meant the Humanities, as I was bilingual in German and English and so I found myself studying English, German and French at “A” level and not the subjects I loved – Biology, Physics and Chemistry. At the end of school, I scraped passes at A Level sufficient to join a 3 year “Business Studies HND Sandwich Course” at the City of Westminster College, Francis Street, Victoria. This included an option of “languages” which later I discarded for “Data Processing” which at the time seemed a good idea. I did enjoy the course and my new found colleagues at the College, despite not really wanting to do the course. I had determined on the first day of my registration for the course to “get through it with the minimum of effort...” and that’s what I did - and so did most of my colleagues, except for one traditional swot, who spent ALL his spare time copying lecture and tutorial notes out in longhand from his notes. Needless to say, he was quite popular for those of us who needed good notes to copy, in the days before photocopiers and e-mail were around.

My two periods of “industrial attachment” which formed integral parts of the sandwich course, were a revelation. The first six months were spent at The City of Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea Joint Computer Centre, learning about data processing. I contend that what I learned there bears little or no relationship to modern-day IT, but it did give me a good all-round knowledge and experience of office-etiquette which stood me in excellent stead for my second industrial attachment with Bosch UK in the final year of my studies. The college had arranged our first placement with Westminster City Council and I had found the second placement at Bosch in Watford, Herts the HQ of the Robert Bosch GmbH Multi-National whose Worldwide base is in Stuttgart, Germany. I owed my second placement to my fluency in German which clinched the deal leading to 6 months employment on the basis of payment of £1000 per annum – significantly less than my new boss at Bosch who, when I arrived, had just taken up his job as Marketing and Market Research Manager, having come straight from qualifying with a first class Honours degree in Economics at Oxford. His knowledge of office etiquette was NIL. He had never spent any time in an office and I was in my element organising systems, filing, equipment and even recruiting a wonderful secretary for my Boss, Robert Mills. Indeed, I was appreciated at Bosch and after the six months were nearly completed, my boss and his boss, Managing Director Mr. Vernon Cedric Mills (VCM for short) ratified my return after graduation to take up a permanent position at Bosch UK. Little did I know, at the time, that acceptance of this offer in 1973, would lead to over 46 years of what I regard as happy and successful employment with Bosch UK, culminating in 2000 with a Line Directorship. To this day, I enjoy a casual relationship with Bosch as a Consultant Expert in Bosch Management Services.

The history of Wiener life could not be complete without mention of my life partner and our wonderful Wiener (Junior) Family. I met Melanie (née Shure - name changed by deed-poll - after her natural father died

and her mother remarried, to Goldwhite) after our “67 Group” youth group at Belsize Square Synagogue had faded into the past and many of my friends drifted into the arms of FZY – The Federation of Zionist Youth, whose “Socio” group met on Tuesday evenings mainly to have Israel centred discussions and social evenings but also to put on charity events such as mediaeval banquets and conferences as well as some dances. My interest was less in Israel, than in the sociability of the membership and the fact that many of my friends from 67 Group migrated to Socio. It was at one such meeting, that a young lady was led into the room by her neighbour in Sidmouth Road, Willesden and introduced to the gathered group as Melanie Goldwhite from next door. Melanie was almost immediately recruited as part of the committee as “Social Secretary” whilst I and several friends had already replaced the previous incumbent committee to run the group. Our interests and direction pointed more towards the social than Israel and Socio became a vehicle to enhance existing and establish long-lasting friendships. Many Socio colleagues are still good friends – some even come from further back to the 67 Group era. Among them was my girl, Melanie, whom I had plucked up significant courage to ask to dance with me at one of Socio’s social events held in Southgate. My friend Andrew Stock had actually wanted to ask her out, but my luck, I beat him to it and that was the beginning of our 46 year (so far) relationship through friendship to marriage and grandparenthood. Melanie took me and my Crohn’s on and we both survived the many pitfalls of relationships through the ages with a very solid marriage and partnership. Our children, Caroline (born 29.09.1978) and David (born 21.03.1983) were brought up with traditional Jewish values but very much with the background of Natalie and Jack Goldwhite and Gerda and Hans Wiener underpinning their development. We had, what I consider to be a happy time as a family of four, with many early holidays in Bournemouth spent at a holiday flat “Crag Head”, Boscombe, on the East Cliff. An abiding memory of these holidays, some of which were just weekends, others in the summer during the school summer holiday, was the grinding journey down from London to Bournemouth in the days before M3 and M27 existed, using the “old” trunk roads, such as the Winchester Bypass which was a 2 lane country road lined, especially during the summer period, with slow-moving caravans and camper vans which were impossible to pass on long stretches of the holiday route with very few passing points. We used to arrange to leave home after supper and travel late at night to avoid the jolly campers! Only problem was, the children often needed to be “watered” on a journey with very few service stations open and NO public toilets. Upon arrival at the flat, it would be multiple journeys to the 7th floor (by lift) and half an hour to set up the travel cot hired from a local shop.

Natalie and Jack Goldwhite, my parents-in-law, generously offered us the flat as often as we wanted it – especially during school holidays. However, after a few years, Crag Head suffered from major structural faults which required scaffolding around the entire building, clearance of the swimming pool (due to leaks into the garage below) and armies of workmen from 7:00 a.m. until 5 p.m. interrupting the tranquillity of our seaside respite over several years. Melanie’s elder sister, Linda, and her family had moved down to Bournemouth in the 80s to run a newsagent and we spent quite a lot of time with them in their wonderful property and garden in Talbot Woods. Naturally, our children loved to be together with their cousins, this being quite a rare occurrence.

The Goldwhites worked hard, as owners of the original Dickens’ “The Old Curiosity Shop (OCS)” in Portsmouth Street, London WC2. Melanie’s natural father had bought the shop and made it into a major tourist attraction visited by virtually every tourist coach coming into London every day of the year except

for Christmas Day. Doubtless it was an exhausting enterprise which Natalie and David Shure had built into a thriving business by working seven days every week for many hours. When David Shure died in 1963 suffering a heart-attack after an operation in the Gordon Hospital, Victoria, the young widow Natalie took on the job to continue building the business, enlisting the assistance of her sister-in-Law, Joan Shure, a small staff and a Manager, David Goldband, who was a fitting double for a character from the Dickens book of the same name as the shop. Natalie's daughters, Linda (eldest), Melanie (middle), Gillian (Youngest) also lent a hand to serve in the shop for "pocket money". Natalie was introduced by friends to Jack Goldwhite quite soon after husband David had died. She fell in love with this bachelor, who soon quit his single life to marry Natalie and take on the three girls as his own. Jack joined Natalie in the Shop to add some strength to the efforts to make the venture the great success it became. At their well-earned retirement from the OCS, Natalie and Jack sold the shop to David Goldband, their long-term Manager, who happily had won a substantial sum of money on the Football Pools enabling the purchase.

So now I come to the final chapter for now. Melanie and I have been happily married for 46 years, our family has grown up and our children are establishing themselves with their own families.

Melanie's career started after successful "O" levels at Henrietta Barnett Grammar School (still one of the foremost Girls Grammar Schools in the UK). She went on to study textiles and design at the London College of Fashion in the West End and qualified as a textile technologist. From study, Melanie moved to business when she joined Marks and Spencer in the then Head Office at Michael House, Baker Street where M & S had a full suite of testing laboratories to assure the quality of all purchase materials and finished goods. Melanie specialised in dying and finishing quality control and helped to ensure that clothing made and sold by M&S at the time held the top reputation for quality and value-for-money of nearly all UK retailers. The consumer public rewarded M&S by ever increasing their patronage and the period during which Melanie worked there was an absolute boom period for the company. In 1978, Melanie announced her pregnancy to her boss and, as was the custom, did not confirm at the time if she would return after the birth. In the event, Caroline's birth on 29 September 1978, 5 days after Melanie's 26th birthday, ended Melanie's career with M&S. Until our second child, David (born 21st March 1983) and his settlement at Rosh Pinah Primary School 5 years later, Melanie executed all the "usual" motherly and household duties with traditional care and love.

When David had turned 5 years old, Melanie retrained and qualified as a Nursery School Teacher, and took on a teaching job at Belsize Square Cheder on Sunday mornings and working the 5 weekdays at Belsize Square's own nursery school under the tutelage of Sue Leon, its Headteacher until 1997, when Melanie and I moved to Stuttgart, W. Germany for a 4 years period as a result of a job offer for me to work at the Bosch HQ for one of the main executive board directors as a prelude to being offered a directorship with Bosch back in the UK.

Melanie and I returned to the familiar surroundings of Edgware from Stuttgart at the end of 1999 and have since retired. We are both still active in our volunteering for Jewish Care and other organisations. Our involvement with Belsize Square endures – especially now that Caroline is Head Teacher at the Cheder there. Our hobbies are Melanie: crosswords, word games, volunteering at the local Jewish Care Day Centre, Leonard Sainer (now for nearly 17 years), Stephen: music (I enjoy playing the piano, the keyboard and the piano accordion, which family and friends say I do rather well, although modesty

prevents me from agreeing with this and indeed, Caroline is also a talented pianist, with sister, Marion, claiming to be the world's worst pianist and our father, Hans, also having been able to play by ear, rather than by notes, thinking he was Golders Green's answer to Thelonius Monk) , Freemasonry, volunteering by entertaining at day centres and care homes and last, but by no means least, jointly working hard at keeping the family together in all ways possible and preserving the Wiener, Goldwhite, Shure (and Godfrey) traditions. We hope to continue for many more years in the same vein.

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My Story

by

Erica W



Erica's Story — Escape to a different World.

It is only now on the suggestion of writing about my parents lives and their exodus from their home country that I began to think about what it must have really been like for them. We left Germany in April 1939 to escape the Nazis, me being only 3 ½ years old and not being aware of what was happening. Throughout my childhood and indeed my whole life, leaving Germany and starting a new life in Australia was dealt with as just facts. So that's how I thought of it. It just happened. My parents never really talked about how they felt about what must have been an extremely traumatic time for them. Firstly what led up to the decision to leave, then finding somewhere to go, packing up, leaving and trying to set up a livelihood in a strange country, strange language and very few job opportunities available.

I believe at first they hoped to be able to migrate to England where my father's cousins the Rockwells and the Rachwalskys had already moved to some years earlier. But that was not to be. They then applied for South America and Australia. I know my father even started learning Spanish. However the visa for Australia came first, just in the nick of time. So that's where we went, my parents, Ruth and Friedrich Schlesinger, my maternal grandmother Martha Fraenkel and me Erica. We were also joined by my mother's brother and his wife, Kurt and Eva Fraenkel. My father was then 39 years old and my mother 34.

I was born in Breslau, Germany. When I was 3 months old we moved to Ratibor, my mother's home town, which at that time was considered to be a safer place to be. In 1935 my parents started their own men's wear business and things were going very well. But gradually as the Nazis took hold they could see only doom. Though these were extremely hard times for our family we were very lucky to have escaped the worst.



Eric aged two years



Erica at home in Elsternwick

At this point perhaps I should introduce myself. My name is Erica Windmiller and I am about to turn 85. I'm living what I consider a comfortable happy life with my partner of 40 years having been divorced from my husband in 1977. We live in suburban Melbourne close to many family members. Despite the Covid 19 lockdown we are not bored, spending a lot of our time on our hobby of painting, among other things. The only thing we miss is going out for coffee to a café every day. But generally we are very lucky here in Australia because of the way our government is handling the crisis.

I have 3 daughters, 2 living close by and the third one has been living in Sydney for the last 3 years. I also have 6 grandchildren and 2 little great granddaughters. All a great joy to me. As well as that my sister Evelyn Fabian and her family live near by. What more could I want?



***Erica's children:
Jenni, Susan and
Karen***



***Erica with Mum and Dad aged 15
months***



Erica aged 15 months

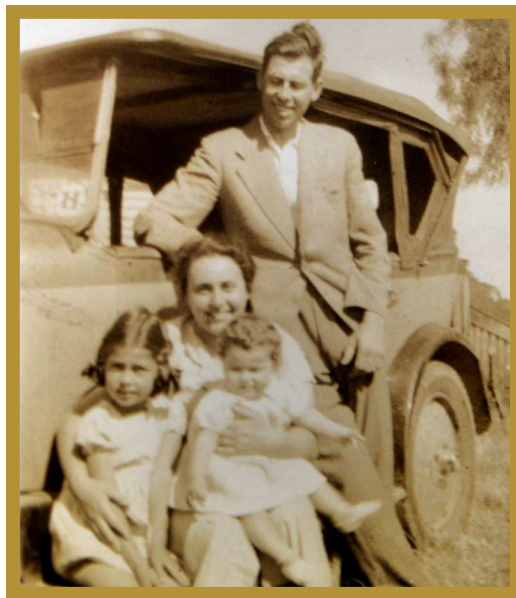
So back to my childhood. How different that would have been if it hadn't been for the Nazis. I am of course very grateful that we managed to leave Germany in time and my parents were able to start a new life in Australia. However it seems from what I've been told that in my first 4 years I led quite a charmed life. I had a nurse maid and we had a housekeeper because my mother worked with my father in their business. I had beautiful clothes and was spoiled by the family around me, my parents, doting grandmothers and my aunt and uncle. I was the first child in the immediate family. So I was happy child with an outgoing personality.

Our lives changed dramatically of course when we migrated. For me it meant that suddenly I had no playmates except the animals on the farm. I have just realised that there was a period of 18 months, aged 4 to 5 ½ when I

had no contact with other children. It makes me sad to think of that poor little girl that was me. My mother tried to book me into a kindergarten but strange as it might seem they wouldn't accept me because I couldn't speak English. How ignorant Australians were about 'foreigners'. I just have to keep reminding myself that it could have been much much worse and I was probably reasonably happy on the farm.



Erica feeding the chooks on the farm



With Mum and Dad on the farm

Though too young to remember the voyage out to Australia, I was told stories about it. Now I wish I had asked for more details. It seems I must have been a very confident little girl. On one occasion my parents couldn't find me anywhere until they finally located me at the hairdresser's. I had told them my mother sent me to have a haircut.

Another time when I was supposed to be asleep in the cabin I decided to use my mother's nail polish to paint my nails. What a mess! It was a very long voyage, 6 weeks in fact and I was probably very bored. I believe my father quite enjoyed the trip, especially the food but my mother and grandmother were seasick a lot of the time.

My first memories are of my mother coming home with a new baby when I was 4 ½. It is now January 1940 just 9 months after our arrival in Australia. I don't remember my reaction to this event, it just happened. So now we have a baby! As my mother's English was not very good in those days she felt more comfortable having the baby at a hospital where she could communicate in German. There happened to be such a place in Melbourne run by an order of German nuns. However it was near the city, a long way from where we lived so my mother went to stay somewhere near the hospital about a week before the baby was due. I guess a new baby was not exactly what my parents needed at this difficult time but I'm sure Evelyn brought them a lot of joy so it was all OK.

At that time we were living on a rented farm, doing market gardening, growing tomatoes etc. That turned out to be unsuccessful so next my parents tried the cheese making business. We moved to a different location and my father bought a few cows which he learnt to milk. He didn't know anything about cows but he soon learnt. My grandmother used to make cottage cheese or Quarg in her kitchen back home. So my parents adapted her methods to make cheese commercially. And so a cottage industry began. Cottage cheese was unavailable in the shops at that time and there were now many immigrants in Melbourne so there was a demand for this cheese. A few delicatessen shops had sprung up in the area where most of the European migrants had settled so these

were my father's customers. The cheese was also popular with the new continental cake shops that had opened in the area. Yummy cheese cake. My mother also learnt to make cheese cake at home so that became an absolute favourite.

So this became our life. My father milked the cows, which meant getting up at 4am every day and he made the cheese. My mother and grandmother packed the cheese, which was done in a room in our house. My father delivered it twice a week. When Evelyn and I were old enough we occasionally helped with the packing. Ours was the only cottage cheese available in Melbourne then so it was very much in demand. At first the cheese was just sold in plain wrapping paper but later when some competition began to appear they chose the brand name being Blue Cow. During school holidays my father sometimes took me with him on his delivery rounds. That was a real treat because the shopkeepers usually made a fuss of me and gave me chocolates. I loved chocolates, still do!

Looking back it was a hard life for my parents in those days. There were no mod cons. No gas or electricity, no sewerage, no telephone, and no radio until 1944 because we were classified 'enemy aliens' by the government. Unfortunately my mother never learned to drive so she was very isolated and depended on my father for transport. Life became a little easier for my father after a few years when he sold his cows to a nearby neighbour and bought the milk from him. He also employed a driver to do some of the deliveries which by then were spread all over Melbourne with the influx of more European migrants. He also employed a farm hand.

February 1941 at age 5 ½ a big event took place in my life—I started school. I couldn't speak a word of English. I wonder how my parents thought I would cope. I never thought to ask them. Strangely enough I took it all in my stride and don't remember being worried or upset. Everyone was very nice to me. On the first day when afternoon playtime came I thought it was home time. My father, who was to pick me up, was nowhere to be seen so I started to walk home. Incidentally we lived about 2 miles from the school. When they noticed me missing one of the staff members came after me and found me after I had already crossed the busy highway. No traffic lights in those days. In fact no traffic lights at all in Dandenong. It seemed to take me only a few days to learn to communicate in English. I don't remember language being a problem. I must have been a natural linguist!! I know children learn quickly and as there were no other migrant children at the school and no teachers who could speak German it was a case of 'sink or swim'. I loved school. Learning and playing with other children and I soon made friends. It was all so different from what must have been a very boring life at home. Evelyn was too young to be any sort of company. I hated the school holidays because there was nothing to do. My parents were too busy working to organise any activities at that stage and we lived too far away from any other children. I didn't have many toys either. I believe there was not much available during the war. I do remember having a lovely doll's pram and a beautiful doll which we brought out from Germany. Watching the cows being milked and playing with the cats were two of the activities I did enjoy.



***Erica on a haystack
on the farm***

***With the family on
the haystack at the
farm***



In 1942 my parents bought a farm, 2 ½ miles from Dandenong and that was to be our permanent home for 7 years. It was a long way to walk to and from school with no company. Didn't like that much at all. What was particularly bad was at some times of the year the magpies would come swooping down at me. Very scary! It was also scary when there was a bull on the road. If the weather was inclement Dad usually drove me to school and occasionally a lady in a jinker[horse and cart] gave me a lift. That was fun. There was very little traffic on our road and not many houses along the way. For a short time there was a boy who lived in one of the nearby houses and we did sometimes walk together. One day I stopped at his place to play for a while [a luxury for me],before going home. My father came looking for me and boy, was he mad! Poor me!

What I really liked was when it rained at home time. I was allowed to go to a friend's place who lived very close to the school and wait there till my father picked me up. Sometimes I was invited to go home for lunch to a friend's place which was a real treat.

For my 10th birthday I was given a bike. Now I could ride to school which was much better but pushing the bike up 2 hills was not so good. When Evelyn started school the following year we were driven to school.



First bike in 1945

My favourite subjects at primary school were arithmetic, spelling, singing and grammar. A spelling competition was held at the school every month which entailed 100 words. Anyone who scored 95 or more correct got their name in the local newspaper. I managed to have my name there nearly every time. Very clever!! I remember my mother sending a cutting to my grandmother in Switzerland.

At lunchtime and playtime we made up lots of fun things to do. One was gathering the fallen pine needles from the trees and making houses out of them. They formed the walls. Swapping postage stamps and swap cards [playing cards] was another favourite. We also made little dolls out of wool and kept them in match boxes. There were also ball games and skipping rope games.

As it was war time some retired teachers came back to make up for the shortage of teachers. We had such a teacher in grade 4 and again in grade 6. He was modern and imaginative in his way of teaching. Every morning we followed the war situation. Can't say I was so interested in that even though it was probably a good thing to do. For art he allowed us to use paint not just pencils. I think he might have supplied the paint himself. He also allowed us to sit wherever we wanted to, even boys and girls together.

Birthdays were the most exciting times in my childhood for many reasons. Firstly there were the presents. There was usually not just one big present but lots of small ones. The dining table was set up the night before

with all these presents such as colouring books, games etc, can't even remember what else but it was great. Then there was always a family get-together with my aunt and uncle and cousins. That usually included my favourite, homemade chocolate cake with chocolate icing. I loved licking the bowl after the mixture had been poured into the baking dish. Yummy! These family gatherings took place for everybody's birthday so they happened quite often. When we were old enough we all played table tennis together on these occasions. Always a yummy afternoon tea as well with home made cake including streusel cake, another one of my favourites. The other wonderful aspect of birthdays from the age of 8 was having friends from school over for a party. As we lived so far away from the town and very few people had cars it was very rare for me to have friends at my place. Very exciting! Firstly giving out the invitations, getting the replies and then on the day picking everybody up in the car. I couldn't wait. Then there were the presents and playing games.

Our official address was Off Powers road, Dandenong, What an address! Everybody else had a number but all we had was Off. I felt cheated! The reason for the 'off' was that our farm was ½ a mile from the main road along a lane. We had no mail deliveries. Our mail had to be picked up from the post office.

Transport

We were lucky to have a car which of course my father needed for business. As we were considered enemy aliens a permit was required every time you left your immediate area. But as my father had to leave 2 or 3 times a week to do his deliveries the police issued him a special permit so he only had to report once a month. The car was also essential for shopping and to buy ice about 3 times a week for the ice chest in the kitchen which was our 'fridge'. Ice was also required for the 'coolgardie' safe in the shed which was covered with Hessian and had water poured over it. That's where the cheese was kept. Imagine, no refrigeration.

The first car I remember was an old Citroen, approx. 1920s vintage and later a 1937 Chevrolet coupe. When the Citroen was no longer needed it was left in the yard for us to play in. That was the best 'toy'.

Occasionally the road into town would get flooded so there were also times when my father would drive me to school. If the flood water was not too deep he could drive through it very slowly but when it was too deep he would have to take a long detour. Our other means of transport was the train to the city which took about half hour. But we had to get to the station first. Going to the city by train and then sometimes travelling on a tram as well was a real treat. I also used to love saving the tickets. Don't know why! No more tickets these days, all different.

Other activities

I loved going to the beach. I have fond memories of my parents picking me up from school on a hot day and we would go to the beach to cool off, which was about ½ hour away by car. Unfortunately with no air conditioning in the car by the time we got home we felt hot again. It was definitely worth it though as these beach outings which also happened at the weekend sometimes were a highlight of my childhood.

A swing made of a rope slung from a tree with an old car tyre as a seat was also a source of great enjoyment. I loved playing with our many cats which sometimes produced cute little kittens.

Joining my father while he milked the cows was something I liked too. I gave all the cows names and I was fascinated by the way they knew their place when they came in to be milked.

At age 10 I had my first visit to a cinema. It was a disaster. The film was Snow White and the Seven Dwarves and I found it quite overwhelming and scary. The people were all so big. I just cried most of the way through it. I think I could handle it now!



***At the beach
in 1950***

More aspects of life on the farm.

As we had no electricity a big kerosene lamp on the kitchen table provided us with light. At bedtime we used candles in individual holders to light the way. We had a kerosene heater in the kitchen but the rest of the house was cold. Very occasionally a fire was lit in the fireplace in the lounge but the lounge was very rarely used.

We used to often play monopoly or snakes and ladders in the evening on the kitchen table. The kitchen was virtually our living room.

Another activity I remember was singing which I always enjoyed. As we were not allowed to have a radio until 1944, there was no other music in the house. But my mother loved singing and so did I so there was a lot of that wherever we happened to be. My father's singing was a little off key but he liked music too.

For cooking and baking there was a wood fuelled stove but we also had a 2 burner kerosene cooker which sat on top of the stove.

In the bathroom we had a chip heater for hot water. The toilet was at the end of the back yard and consisted of a bucket with a wooden seat over it. Once or twice a week my father dug a big hole and emptied the contents of the bucket into it. All a very smelly affair!

The laundry was also an outhouse and had a copper, a trough and a wringer. We had running water laid on but it was not suitable for drinking so we also had a rain water tank.

Our house was quite pretty really in the Victorian style. I thought of it as just an old farm house at the time. Most of my friends lived in brick houses. There are old timber houses in that Victorian style in the area where I live now that sell for around \$2,000,000. They've been renovated of course with all mod. cons. We had a fence around the house with a front and back garden so it was separated from the farm. During the mushroom season there were plenty of mushrooms in the paddocks which we enjoyed going out to pick. Had to be quick though because everybody thought it was their right to go mushrooming wherever they liked.

War time conditions

Our windows had to be blackened at night. That meant dark curtains so no light could be seen presumably by enemy planes! We also had trenches dug on our property. Not sure what they were for, perhaps to hide in. At school we often had air raid drills. When the siren sounded we all had to run out and lie flat under the trees. Luckily it was never for real. The enemy never did come.

In one way I was lucky during the war because my father didn't have to go away. Even enemy aliens were called up but my father being a primary producer was exempt.

We were issued with ration coupons, the same as in England, for many every day items of food and clothing. Items such as sugar, butter, tea and meat were rationed but as we had our own produce on the farm we were not affected at all.

My parents managed to bring all their possessions to Australia, all their furniture, crockery, linen and clothes. I remember my mother's high heeled black shoes which I thought were beautiful but I never saw her wearing them. There was never the opportunity for years. The beautiful handcrafted furniture somehow looked out of place in the old farm house. Although I adjusted quite well to my new life, part of me still felt like an outsider. The fact that I was born in Germany, Australia's enemy at the time and that I was Jewish, which I tried to hide, were my 'problems'. I just wanted to be like everybody else. I remember thinking, thank goodness I'm not Japanese as well! I was also embarrassed by my parents' accent though I knew they couldn't help it. At least when I started going to Jewish Sunday school there were many other children like me so that was nice. I just didn't like being different—didn't like having rye bread sandwiches in my lunch when everybody else had white bread so I tried to hide them. Didn't like my name, my dark hair, didn't like being tall and wished I had curly hair. Boy I really thought I had problems when in fact I was really quite lucky.

1945 End of the War and I am 10 years old.

This was of course an extremely important event in all our lives. For me what was particularly memorable was when we were notified that my grandmother, Oma Hanna had survived and had been evacuated to Switzerland. She had spent the most part of the war in the Teresienstadt concentration camp. I remember our neighbour from across the paddock coming over to give us the news. I don't actually know if it was a telegram or a phone call but as we had no phone there was no way of contacting us directly. It took a few more months for arrangements to be made for her to come to Australia. During those few months when she was in Switzerland there was a lot of correspondence between us and so what I liked was getting all those lovely Swiss stamps every time she sent a letter. I was an avid stamp collector. In 1946, I clearly remember the day Oma arrived. It was my first time to an airport, very exciting. For years I could still remember the plane's path from the time we first spotted it till it landed. Of course I was also excited to meet my grandmother, my father's mother. She brought us each a watch and lots of Swiss stamps. She often told us stories about life in the concentration camp but I feel she wanted to shield us children from the worst of it.

Although she liked being with us, thinking about it now, life must have been very boring for her in Dandenong. She helped with the household chores but apart from that she seemed to spend a lot of time in her room looking out the window. She used to report to us what the neighbours were doing. Once a week she caught the train to Malvern where there was a Jewish elderly citizens club. They were all German speakers so that was great for her. After spending her final 10 years with us she died at the age of 80 in 1956 just a few months short of becoming a great grandmother. She had a very close connection with someone in London. Margaret Levin's great grandmother, Meta Schlesinger was her sister.

The very best day of my childhood—moving to 70 Scott Street, Dandenong in 1948.

It was like heaven, having electricity and gas, toilet inside the house and close to school and friends. Because materials were hard to get it took a long time to build the house but we watched it progress with excited anticipation. Then finally the day came to move in. We had a phone too but at first I was a bit apprehensive about using it. It was so great to be able to meet with friends after school and at weekends a 'luxury' I did not have all those years living on the farm. After begging my parents to buy a piano and let me learn to play that soon happened too. We had many happy times singing around the piano as my mother was a fine sight reader. After all those years she certainly hadn't forgotten how to play.

Life just began to coast along very nicely after that in a normal way. By that time I had already had 2 years at high school.

High school

This was a whole new world. Moving around to different classrooms and different teachers for different subjects. I liked it a lot. As I always liked singing I jumped at the opportunity to join the school choir. I was also introduced to Gilbert and Sullivan operas which I adore to this day. There was a school performance of HMS Pinafore which I absolutely loved, quite an eye opener for me. In order to further develop our appreciation of music we were sometimes taken by train to the Melbourne Town Hall for special youth concerts where as well as listening to music, the different instruments of the orchestra were explained to us.

Going to Gym.

Soon after moving to Scott street I started going to a gym class which was held at the Methodist church hall not far from our place. It involved exercise to music and dancing. There was always a performance at the end of the year. All great fun and very exciting. The class took place in the evening but in those days it was perfectly safe for a young girl to walk by herself at night. Nothing bad ever happened.

Forms 5 and 6

At the end of form 4 a lot of people turned 15 which was the age they were allowed to leave school, so many did. There was a big decline in the number of students in the higher classes. By the time I got to Matriculation which was form 6 there were only 19 of us altogether. In most of the classes there were only 6 students which was very good for us. We were a very successful form 6 with everybody passing whereas the year before had a substantial failure rate. Perhaps that scared us so we worked harder. Despite the pressure to succeed it was a very enjoyable year and we were a bit sad saying goodbye to everybody at the end of it.

So at age 17 ½ my school days are over and so is the first important chapter of my life. I'm about to launch into adulthood with no idea what's in store for me. But now I know and I'm still here. There have been good times and bad times but I prefer to remember the good times.

On that note I am about to have my daily bridge chat over the phone with my bridge partner. As our club is closed because of Virus that's all we can do. However we do enjoy it very much. As our lock down is being eased now we have arranged a private game at home this week. Slowly, slowly let's hope life will get back to normal again.

Footnote

My parents retired from the cheese business in 1967. They then moved to the Melbourne suburb of Brighton. They began to travel extensively starting with a seven month trip to Europe and the UK. This included visiting relatives in London. When they returned they took up two absorbing hobbies, namely Bridge and Croquet and were active members of B'nai B'rith. My mother unfortunately died suddenly at age 76 of a stroke but my father lived to 95.

My uncle, Kurt Fraenkel who had been a lawyer in Germany retrained here and ran a very successful legal firm almost until his death at age 80. His wife Eve lived to 100.



***Oma Hanna's 80th
birthday 1955***



***Erica with
Mum and Dad
in 1962***



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Our Story

by

Naomi & Julian B



Ida - my mother

Mama was born in Worms, Germany my grandfather was the Chazan in the famous Worms synagogue that was burnt down by the Nazis in the early nineteen forties. Unusual for Jewish girls in those days, Mama went to study law in Heidelberg. In 1933 when Hitler became chancellor. At this time, a young man whom Mama knew approached her and told her to leave as soon as she could as it would become unsafe for her to continue her studies. He also explained that he could never speak to her again and when she saw him walking towards her a day or so later, he actually crossed the road and ignored her.....he was wearing the full SA uniform.



My mother's parents in 1900 Germany in their 20's



1930, my mother in her 20's in Israel

She wisely heeded his warning and not only left Heidelberg, but bade her mother and sister farewell and travelled to Palestine, where her older brother, a paediatrician, was a co-founder of a now famous Kibbutz. Mama lived on that Kibbutz in a shack, cleaning out chicken sheds for a year and then went to Haifa and easily got a good job managing a British construction company.

In 1936, Mama travelled back to Germany to get her mother and sister out, against the advice of her doctor brother who told her that their mother would die from disease and heat if she came to Palestine. "Let her die from that," said Mama, "but not in the hands of the Nazis."

My grandmother lived on well into her eighties and my aunt, who was 17 years old when she left Germany, lived till the ripe old age of 94. Mama often told me how surprised she was that during her life time she was told by so many people how they regretted not having had the courage to get their loved ones out.

Mama met my father after her return from Germany and they were married on the 5th September 1939, the day Hitler marched into Paris. She swore not to bring children into this nasty, lost world, but happily, I was born in 1942 and my brother in 1946. We had a very happy childhood in Haifa, until my father decided it was time to see the world and accepted jobs in strange countries such as Turkey, Iran and finally in 1961, in England.

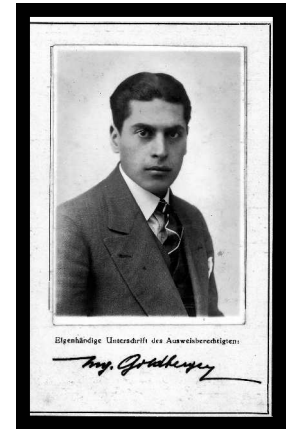
Mama died in 1988. I still miss that wonderful, brave and wise lady so much.

Freddy - my father

Dad was born in Vienna and after qualifying as an architect,

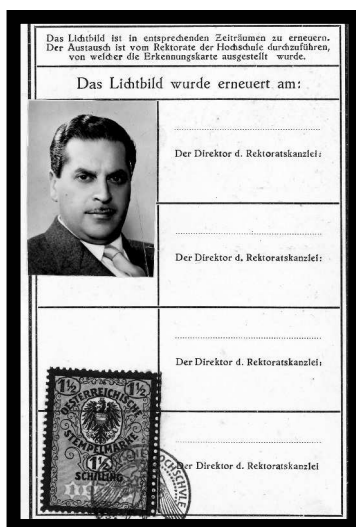


**1948, my
mother's
Israeli Identity
card**



My father at Vienna University

he travelled to Palestine having been inspired by Theodore Herzl as a young boy. A few days after he arrived in Haifa, he saw an advert for a competition to build the lower part of Haifa. Living on tins of sardines and apples, he worked solidly for weeks and of course won and started his own studio and became a well know architect.



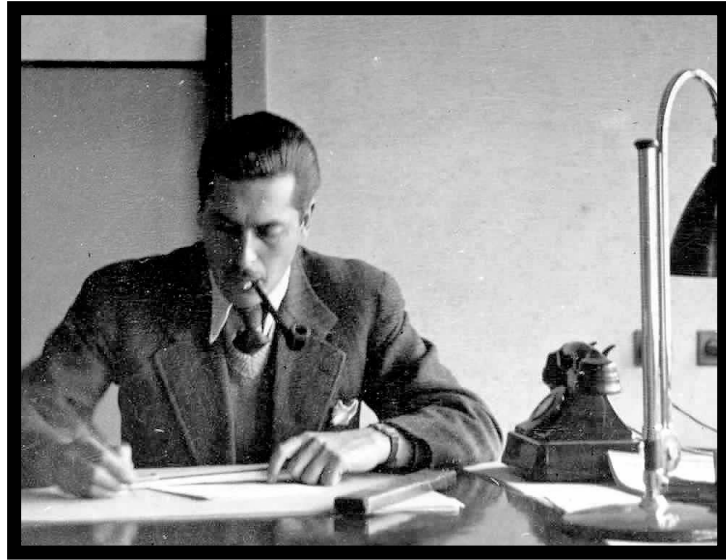
My father in his 40's in Israel



1934, The famous Bad Galim Casino in Haifa that my father built

His building are still wonderful: the refinery for the British, the famous casino in Bat Galim and many beautiful villas. He fought in the underground in the War of Independence, often risking his life disguised as an Arab.

***1935, my father at his
down town Haifa office***



Dad was a breathtakingly handsome mixture of Clark Gable and Omar Sharif. However, in the mid-fifties he became disillusioned with the very socialist Mapam government and decided to spread his wings. I remember him saying "they want me to build boxes. I do not build boxes". Ah well, I still regret having left Israel as a thirteen year old girl, but that was how it was. Papa died in 1979 he was only 70 years old. What a charmer he was!

Our Story

In 1962 a gorgeous 18 year old young man from Cape Town came to stay with my parents as a favour to a mutual friend of theirs. I was not there when he arrived but the next morning he was coming down the stairs as I was going up the stairs. He just said "hello" and I cheekily replied "hello" and that was it, love at first sight, as the French say "un coup de foudre".

We got married in 1966, Carissa was born in 1968 and David in 1969. Julian's career blossomed as a chartered accountant and later a banker and we lived in Hamburg, Paris, Jersey and New York. We moved back to London in 2000 and are happily settled in our flat in Hampstead.



***1950. My parents, brother
and myself in Turkey***

Carissa has built up a wonderful career as an executive coach and is living happily with her partner Sean. David and our dear daughter in law Lisa got married in 1996.

Our granddaughter Katie was born in 2000 and is now in her third year of Medical School and Zac our 17 year old grandson is going to do his A levels next year. The joy that our children and grandchildren bring us is hard to describe, pure magic is the nearest I can think of.

My education has been centred on languages but my main interest has always been psychology. I trained as a Relate counsellor and did relationship counselling for many years. After retiring I volunteered at the Royal Court of Justice for thirteen years, helping litigants in person with emotional struggles in and out of court. I also became a bereavement counsellor for the Marie Curie Hospice for a few years.

My brother Rafi lives in Philadelphia with his lovely wife Helma and two sons Justin and Tristan. I wished we could have all lived in the same place but unfortunately that was not to be. Luckily we see one another as often as possible sharing holidays every few years.

In closing I would like to share that all through my adult life I found any change very difficult. That initial move as a thirteen year old girl left a distinct mark in my ability to cope with change. What I have learned is that being close to one's family and friends is so important, the feeling of belonging is something I treasure very much. We are now in our bunker with COVID19 threatening all our existence and I just wonder what the next chapter in our lives will bring.



Our Story

by

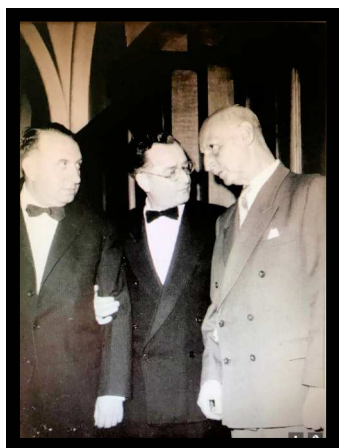
Gordon & Judy S



Gordon Smith- A Nomadic Story

I was born to first generation Holocaust survivors each with their own painful recollections and history.

My Father, Samuel (Sam) Smith was born Shmuel Schmidt in a tiny village (Tzia) in pre-war Austria which later became Poland on 14th March 1914. But at the age of 4 months, just before the 1st world war, his family escaped to Sudetenland, which later became Czechoslovakia, to a town called Teplice- Schonau, where he grew up. Teplice was the second largest Jewish community in Bohemia, (after Prague).



***Sam (centre) with Otto Frank
and Rabbi Takov Soetendorp***

My father told me many stories of his time in Teplice, the Antisemitism he suffered in school, the many fights that took place and his growing passion to go to Palestine. He was an ardent Zionist. As he grew up he became a member of various Zionist organisations including Maccabi, Hechalutz and Tchelet Lavan (The Blue and White Brigade). In 1936, my father was sent as a shaliach to Slovakia to organise Jewish youth and students to leave and emigrate to Israel. There my father met my mother Judith (Yolana Yehudit) during one of his trips.

My Mother, Judith, was born Yolana Yehudit Kucera on 9th April 1916, in Boleshov, a small village in Slovakia, where her father was the kosher butcher. She had a sad early life and a traumatic upbringing. Her parents had a very difficult marriage and divorced (unusual in those days) when she was still very young. Judith was the middle child of three sisters. Her mother suffered severe depression and mental illness and ultimately was sent to a mental hospital many miles away from Boleshov (not a pleasant experience in those days). So Judith rarely saw her mother.

Judith's father then remarried a woman who did not want to know his children or have the two younger children in the house, so they were sent to an orphanage, also many miles from Boleshov. While there, Judith's younger sister, aged 9, was playing with a toy tea set, given to her as a present from their mother, but stood too close to an open stove pretending to make tea. Her clothing caught fire and she died from her burns in front of Judith. My mother, sadly, retained these awful memories for the rest of her life.

Judith's father was then forced to take back his two remaining daughters but his new wife would only allow the eldest child to live with them and Judith was sent to live with her grandmother and spent most of her days with the maid in her shed. From then on Judith was nicknamed by all her relations as "Poor Yolanka".

Judith grew up in Boleshov looked after by her grandmother and as she grew, relations with her father improved and many years later she moved back into the family home which was where she met Sam during one of his trips to Bratislava and the surrounding villages including Boleshov. They met again in Teplice where Judith went on "Hachshara" (translated as "preparation". The term is still used for training programs and agricultural centres in Europe

and elsewhere). Judith then trained as a nurse in Bruno.

Their romance blossomed over the next many months, even during those very difficult times and my father made a number of trips to visit her during his travels to Slovakia.

By 1938 the situation had become intolerable; Sam had been kicked out of university and the writing was on the wall. His father had died in 1936 and his mother tried to maintain the household as a widow with 5 children. Sam's eldest brother had left for Palestine in 1936 and my father became the main bread winner, with his Mother.

Sam continued his trips to Slovakia on behalf of the Zionist organisations and also maintained a correspondence with Judith. His letters to her became more despondent as the months wore on. His letter of 14th September 1938 reads:-

“....I do not know when I will be able to write to you again. Today, my mother, and Ella have gone to Poland. Panic is extreme. The majority of shops are closed, factories stand idle and students are striking. There is a state of emergency over most of Sudetenland and the police are armed. After Hitler's speech there were demonstrations and shops were looted. Now Jews and Czechs are rushing to leave. You can imagine the scenes at the railway and bus stations. The stations look like refugee camps; luggage, rucksacks, bedding and blankets everywhere, babies crying, children running, looking for parents and everybody pushing to get on a train or a bus. It is impossible to describe the picture of desperation.....Now I have packed everything in a hurry for the danger of a pogrom is very real. I do not know how long it will be possible for me to remain here. Judith, the situation is horrible. When I leave with my brother, we are thinking of going either to the Carpathian mountains or to Slovakia. Tomorrow I will try to get a weapon permit....”

On 12th October 1938 my father travelled to Bratislava and after a few days left to visit Judith, by now, his Fiancée, in Boleshov. He stayed with her family but that night he was arrested by Slovakian authorities and gaoled. The following day he was taken to a rudimentary concentration camp on the Hungarian border. There were about 1,000 people there at the time. There he helped the setting up of various committees, one to organise liaison with the Hungarian guards, one to get cleaner water, one to organise skilled prisoners to build up the camp. The situation was terrible, food was scarce, there were no beds, everything was disorganised and there was great depression and suicides.

So Sam, together with some other young men decided to escape. After observing the timing of the rounds by the guards, they escaped in pairs. Luckily my father's “partner” was a man who spoke both Hungarian and Slovak. My father only spoke Czech and German, so they agreed that if stopped, (which they were) my father would pretend to be both deaf and dumb. Somehow it worked. They walked the 50 kilometres to the town of Galanta.

Sam then managed to make contact with Judith and together they travelled to Bruno where they got married on 15th January 1939 by a local Rabbi.

As the dark clouds got ever blacker, my parents decided to flee. They hoped to go to Palestine but this proved impossible. So as my father spoke reasonable English and had contacts with the British embassy, they arranged to flee to England, each one leading a group of some 30 young Jewish refugees. Before leaving, my father searched the lists of names in the “Refugee Office” in Prague and discovered that his younger brother Otto (Aaron) was held in a camp near Prague. He managed to arrange his escape and Otto joined the group my father was leading.

Sam, his brother and some thirty youngsters left by train on 10th March 1939, leaving my Mother and her group who followed on the last train out of Prague on 15th March 1939. On that very day, Hitler's troops invaded Prague. A few hours delay in her departure would have ended my mother's story in a very different and tragic way.

It was a very eventful and difficult journey for both groups and a number of refugees never made it. They travelled by train with many stops and searches via Pilzen and Munich and ultimately to Belgium where they managed to board a ship going to England. Judith followed a few days later by a similar route.

Sadly, Sam's Mother and both sisters and their families perished in the camps by 1942 as did many relations of my mother. Miraculously, Judith's father hid in the woods near Boleshov for three years surviving like an animal being left food by his second wife in the woods. He later managed to emigrate to Israel to live with his eldest daughter, Deborah, where he died peacefully many years later.

My Parents were joyfully reunited at Woburn house, London, after their escape from Prague. They moved to The David Eder Farm, an agricultural "school", in Kent where they lived until 1942. While there, my elder brother, Uri, was born in 1940. Also while there, Sam obtained a Diploma in Psychology and Social Sciences.

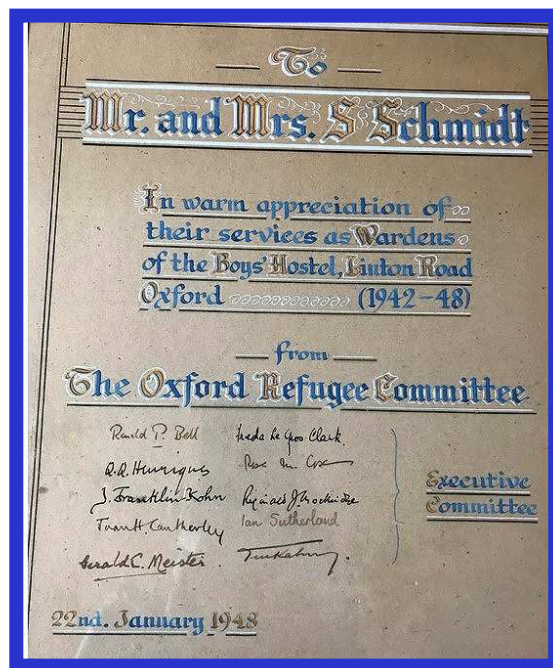


Gordon at 2 months on Judith's knee next to Sam with some of the "Boys" at the Linton Rd Kindertransport Home in Oxford 1944

My parents were then invited by the "Oxford Refugee Committee" to set up a Kindertransport Boys home in Linton Road, Oxford, looking after over 100 children between 1942 and 1948. I was born in the home on 15th December 1943 and I still have the lovely photo of me on my Mothers' lap surrounded by "the boys". The very wonderful certificate awarded to my parents by the Oxford Refugee Committee in "warm appreciation of their services" hangs proudly in my home today. While in Oxford my father obtained a further diploma in public and social administration followed by a second diploma in Psychology.

.Many years later, in July 1998, my father gave “Testimony” to Alan Swark which was recorded over 4 days. My father recounts that in 1947, children who were now coming from concentration camps had even greater problems.

**1948#Certificate awarded to
Sam by Oxford Refugee
Committee**



He records that:-

“They were very difficult children. I remember when they first came, we would cut bread and put it into baskets and put it on the table. The bread disappeared within a few minutes. I had to explain to them that they need not worry; there is plenty of bread. We would again put bread on the table and again it disappeared. It was two days later when the smell from their bedrooms was so strong that we discovered that they had cut open their mattresses and hid the bread inside. It did not help that many of the children were wetting their beds at night and the smell of the mouldy bread covered in urine was overpowering”.

In May 1948, the Declaration of Independence of Israel was signed. My father, being an ardent Zionist, immediately arranged all his affairs and in early 1949, my parents Sam and Judith, my elder brother, Uri and I sailed for Israel. I was just five at the time.

By then, by the age of just five I had lived in Oxford, then London for a short while, then in Lingfield for a few months where my mother found work in a children's home while my father made the travel arrangements to Israel, and then back to London for the last few months before we left. By then I had attended at least four Kindergartens with many more schools to follow.

On arrival in Israel, my father's eldest brother, Yechiel, who had emigrated to Israel in 1936, met us and housed us in an old Arab house in Tel Aviv. Sadly, it was very dilapidated with no windows, no doors and even no roof. After a few weeks, my father managed to get a government post to run an Approved school housing juvenile prisoners near Tel Mond.

However, the location of Tel Mond which was very near Tulkarem, a Jordanian village in the West Bank was far too dangerous. There was nightly firing across the border and regular infiltration of “fedayeen” (Arab guerrillas). My mother therefore refused to live in Tel Mond especially with two young children so my father asked to be

moved and was sent to head an approved school in Jerusalem. So the family moved there.

In October 1949, my younger Brother Danny, (now Rabbi Daniel Smith, recently retired senior Rabbi at Edgware Reform Synagogue), was born

I remember a sad incident while living in this old house in Jerusalem which had huge metal gates at the entrance attached to two large pillars. A number of children were playing around those gates. My elder brother, Uri, aged 10, and I, aged 7, climbed the pillars and sat at the top. Our friends started shaking the gates and one of the gates which must have weighed tons, was dislodged and fell on my younger brother, Danny, who was not yet 2. It took many men to lift the gate and I and Uri crawled under and dragged Danny out. He was rushed to hospital but was given very little chance of survival. My mother, praying constantly, resorted to the old Jewish myth that if you change the name of a sick person, this will confuse the “Malach Hamavet” (The angel of Death) and he will overlook collecting that soul. Clearly it worked as Danny, with the added name Yehudah, miraculously survived and fully recovered.

My father then started travelling between the three main approved homes in Jerusalem, Tel Mond and Herzlia so the family moved once again, this time to a large Kibbutz called Givat Chayim, near the coastal town of Hadera. This was a very “socialist” kibbutz. The children all lived in the “Children’s Home” of the kibbutz, together, in one large dormitory. The parents were allowed to “visit” their children for two hours each day between 4 and 6 pm. No one owned any possessions. Each week you took your dirty clothes to the Kibbutz laundry and were handed fresh clothes which may have fitted you.....or not!

While living there, my father got a permanent job at the main prison in Tel Mond which was situated in a small valley with the main road running on a ridge above the prison. I recollect one day while my mother was on a bus travelling along that road with her three young children sitting next to her, spotted my father leading a group of long term hardened prisoners across the prison yard. Without thinking, she pointed to the prison yard and shouted to us “Look, There is Daddy, There is Daddy!” The bus went silent (very unusual on an Israeli bus) and the pitying looks we got from the other passengers will never be forgotten.

While living in Kibbutz Givat Chaim the political differences in the Kibbutz escalated and my parents decided they had to leave. Only a short time later the Kibbutz physically split into two kibbutzim, with fencing between the two. One was a “Mappai” Kibbutz and the other a “Mapam” Kibbutz

My Parents firstly moved back to Jerusalem and finally to Bat Yam which was a small emerging town in the middle of sand dunes with jackals and hyenas roaming at night between Holon and Yaffo (which was still a no go area) Every time we wanted to travel from Bat Yam to Tel Aviv, we needed an armed guard to accompany us!.

My father obtain a position as senior Psychologist at the large mental hospital situated in Bat Yam and spent the last two years, while in Israel working there. In later years he always replied to the question “what did you do in Israel” with the answer “I spent six years in Prison and two years in a Mental Asylum”. This always raised a few eyebrows. While living in Bat Yam He applied for an MA course in psychology at The Hebrew University. However, he soon realised that it would be impossible to complete the course there as The University was based on Mount Scopus and permission had to be obtained from the Jordanians just to travel there.

So my father applied to a University in Canada and was accepted .He asked for three years unpaid leave from the government and, once again we packed our bags and prepared to leave for Canada, via England. We left Israel in May 1956, literally just weeks before the 1956 Suez war! By then, during the over seven years I spent in Israel between the ages of 5 and 12, I had moved home at least six times and attended a similar number of schools.

On the way to England, bound for Canada, my father made contact with an old tutor of his, Oliver Zangwill, the son of Rabbi Israel Zangwill, who was Professor of Experimental Psychology, at the University of Cambridge, who replied saying “Why do you want to go to Canada, I will get you an introduction to Birkbeck College” which he did. We never made it to Canada! We stayed in England and my father obtained an academic postgraduate Diploma from Birkbeck College

I was 12 when we arrived in England in May 1956, just 7 months short of my Bar Mitzvah. My first few months in this country were very miserable and unhappy. In Israel I went to a co-ed school with many friends, both boys and girls, with a very active outdoor social life. In England, despite my lack of formal English, I managed to obtain a place (I think due to my older brother’s academic achievements in Israel) at Highbury Grammar School, a strict boys’ school in a very tough neighborhood. Boys aged 12 are not known for their tolerance, understanding and sympathy. I was beaten up, abused and bullied nearly every day.

I remember, after a few weeks at the school, the headmaster visited my parents as he noticed from the school register that my older brother attended school on Monday, Wednesday and Friday while I attended on Tuesday and Thursday. The following week the attendances were reversed and this pattern was followed for weeks. My parents explained that as we had no money, we could only afford one school blazer (the formal uniform of the school) so Uri and I alternated attendance at the school wearing the one jacket. I remember the headmaster, nearly in tears, saying they had dozens of jackets in the lost property office of the school which had never been retrieved and immediately arranged to supply us with another jacket so that we could both attend daily.

My parents, who came to England nearly penniless, found accommodation above a shop at 92, Gillespie Road, London, N5, just down the road from the Arsenal football ground. My father, who knew Lady Lily Montague, was offered the position as General Secretary of the World Union for Progressive Judaism (WUPJ). While there he made many friends, including Otto Frank, the father of Anne Frank, and Rabbi Yakov Soetendorp of the Netherlands. He served in that post until 1960 when the WUPJ moved its headquarters from London to New York and he relinquished his job in favour of Rabbi Hugo Gryn who took over.

Within a few months of arrival we managed to move to Wembley and my parents, with the help of friends, bought a small 3 bedroom house in First Avenue Wembley. My parents were some of the founder members of Middlesex New Synagogue, an emerging Reform community. Some years later, we moved to Regal Way, Kenton.

I moved to Preston Manor Grammar School in Wembley. Again, entering a new class as a “foreigner” meant the bullying and abuse continued. After a few days of this I realized I would not survive unless I retaliated in some way. The following day, I was confronted by the biggest school bully and four of his acolytes. Before they could start hitting me I challenged him in a loud voice, overheard by many, to a boxing match in the Gym after school. The news spread like wild fire and most of the school was intrigued about this foreign new pupil who has challenged another older pupil to a fight. That afternoon, after school closed, I went to the Gym with a heavy heart and with great anxiety. Many pupils had turned up to watch even including the sports master, who stayed in the background fascinated by what might follow. I stripped to my sports gear and plimsolls; put on a pair of boxing gloves and waited. I felt very lonely and vulnerable. After some time it dawned on everyone that the bully had chickened out and would not turn up. Suddenly I changed from being the “outsider” to being a hero. The sports master came over to talk to me and when he heard that basketball was the national sport in Israel, he invited me to try out for the school team, which I did and then spent many years representing the school at basketball and formed friendships within the team. The bullying stopped overnight!

At school, I joined the Air Training Corps, rising to the giddy heights of Sergeant. I also obtained both my gliding

license and ultimately my flying license. I applied to The Royal Air force Cranwell college to read Aeronautical engineering but was rejected on the grounds that my father was a “Foreign Alien” born in a “Communist” country!

So I then applied and was offered a place at Bristol University, but before taking up the offer, I decided to apply for “articles” and take up chartered accountancy, as in those days, you could take up articles with just A levels. I regretted not going to university ever since.

I initially joined the firm of Lubbock Fine & Co but after a few months, after a difference of opinion with my Principal, I moved to a firm called Moodie Young which, shortly after, merged with Citroen Wells. I gained my qualifications with that firm and became a partner a few years later.

While at school, I, naturally, started taking an interest in girls which continued while I was working. I am embarrassed to admit that I had a map pinned to my bedroom door with a circle, with a one mile radius, with my home at the centre drawn on it. When I met a prospective new girlfriend my second question was to ask her where she lived and if it was outside that circle, I did not pursue the relationship as I was aware of the “Costs of Time and Motion”! My first question (to myself) was “could I live with this girl for the rest of my life”. Invariably the answer was No, especially as we had just met, which was fine, as we could start going out together with no long term attachments.

In October 1964, at a joint 21st birthday party of some friends, I noticed a fascinating, beautiful, dark eyed girl, who had just returned from the USA having spent a year there as an exchange student. She was so full of herself, totally obnoxious, that I fell in love with her at first sight. When I asked myself the first question, I was mortified to find that the answer was Yes, a resounding Yes, and I had not even started talking to her yet. Luckily, when we started talking, I found out that her name was Judy and that she lived within the “magic” one mile circle. That was a relief! I also learnt that Judy had volunteered as secretary to the young Rabbi Lionel Blue and was going on a Leadership weekend to Westcliffe the following week. I managed to wangle myself a place and spent the weekend with her.

When I got home on the Sunday night, my head was in a whirl. I told my mother to phone my office the following morning to say I was unwell and I hitch hiked the following four days to Cardiff, Birmingham, even as far as Edinburgh, to visit ex-girlfriends with whom I had retained a friendship. I could not get Judy out of my head so, on my return on the Friday I phoned her to ask her out. Her response was “what took you so long to phone?” I remember our first date which was to see the James Bond film “Dr No” at the Kensington Odeon. On our return to her home, I proposed to her after knowing each other for just a few days. Both our sets of parents were somewhat surprised but strangely did not demur. Judy’s father was in hospital having suffered a reaction to some medication so I had to visit him there to ask for his daughter’s hand in marriage. His response from his hospital bed, with a smile, was “Why don’t you wait till the warmer weather; you might feel different by then”. We did not. I was 20 and Judy 17 at the time.



***Judy and Gordon Wedding
photo with Sam & Judith,
Gordon's parents***

Some three years later; (we had to wait until I was out of articles and no longer earning £5 a week), we got married on 7th

January 1968 at West London Synagogue in the presence of four Rabbis being Rabbis Hugo Gryn, Michael Goulston, Lionel Blue and Uri Thernal. Despite our wishes, we had a huge wedding, with family, relations and friends of our parents being present but, as in those times, our own friends were only invited after the dinner and the speeches once the dancing commenced. (Fast forward 25 years when Judy and I celebrated our silver wedding anniversary and took over a lovely restaurant in Hampstead, one of our friends stood up to propose a toast to us with the words “Thank you for inviting me for dinner tonight because at your wedding, I was only invited for the Buffet and Ball!”.)

We moved into our first home which was a lovely maisonette in Pinner. It cost £4,400 and I had great difficulty raising the £400 deposit having taken a mortgage of £4,000. It was wonderful starting our married life there. Our first child, Gideon, was born in 1970 after which we moved to West Hill Wembley where our second child, Joanne, was born in 1972.

I was invited to become a partner with my firm Citroen Wells, ultimately rising to the position of Senior Partner. I was fortunate to build up a wonderful client base specializing in acting for authors, including such wonderful clients such as J.K Rowling and John Le Carre, Not for Profit Enterprises and International Trusts. I also became a Vice President of a massive International multi- disciplinary Network called GGI (Geneva Group International) where Judy and I were fortunate to travel the globe on international conferences ranging from Athens to Zanzibar and most of the letters of the alphabet in between.

In 1989, I offered my parents, a trip back to Czechoslovakia (which they had left some 50 years previously) to celebrate their Golden Wedding and my father’s 75th birthday. They were very nervous to go on their own so asked that Judy and I go with them. At the time Czechoslovakia was still under Communist rule and getting in or out was very difficult. Initially I planned to fly there and hire a car but it proved impossible to hire a car in that country. I then planned that we would fly the Vienna, hire a car there and drive to Bratislava which is less than 80K from Vienna but no car company in Vienna would allow a car to be taken across the border. In any event, as my Mother wanted to take lots of presents to the remaining relatives in Boleshev and Bratislava I decided we would drive in my Volvo 240 the 1,600K in two days. Crossing the border proved interesting but ultimately we arrived in Boleshov. We spotted an old man clearing a path and my Mother went to ask the way to the old cemetery. She was such a long time, Judy went over to find out that this man as a 14 year old used to bring the wood and stoke the fire at my grandfather’s shop and was apologizing to my mother for everything that happened to her family.

We managed to visit my mother’s relations, and when they saw our car and were handed all the lovely presents my mother had brought to them, one of the old cousins, now in his 70s said to my mother “You are no longer Poor Yolanka”. This moved all of us to tears.

I was preparing for my first London marathon which was only two weeks later on 23rd April, so had to go for a training run every morning. Invariably, I found myself being followed by a Czech police car.

On our return after a ten day trip I was delighted to complete the marathon in under four hours. Since then, I completed four further marathons including the Paris marathon and my last marathon at the age of 64 which was the New York Marathon which I managed to complete in just over four hours.

Both my parents lived a long and satisfying life. At the tender age of 74, my father was very proud to obtain his final diploma of a BA, with honours, in Philosophy and Psychology. My parents both died at the age of 92 (two years apart). As my father said when celebrating his 92nd birthday, a few months before his death, “I came to England with nothing and look now, I leave a dynasty!”

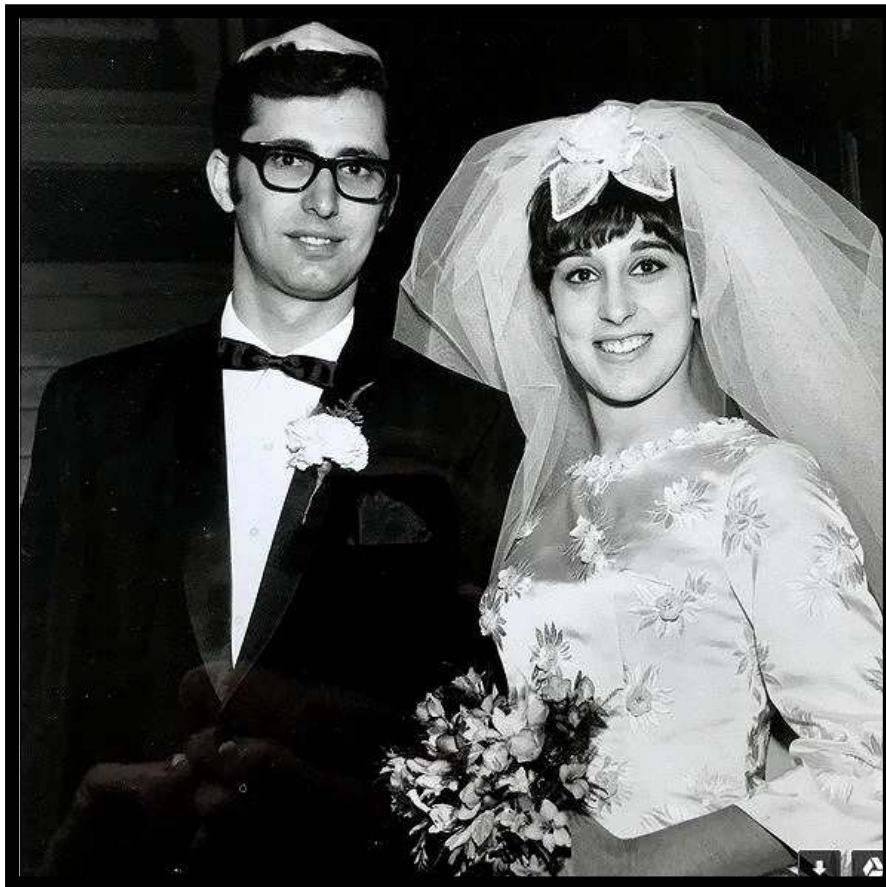
Judy and I now live in our lovely home in Hampstead Garden Suburb (HGS) close to many members of our family, including Judy's two brothers and our son, Gideon and his family. Our daughter, Joanne made Aliyah to Israel over 20 years ago and we visit her and her family often.

We are both involved with our synagogue, Alyth and work with a number of charities. Currently, Judy chairs HGS Heritage, an online virtual museum of Hampstead Garden Suburb and also works in "Restorative Justice" visiting a number of prisons during the course of her work. I am, currently, the President of the European Union for Progressive Judaism (EUPJ), which allows Judy and me the opportunity to visit many wonderful communities across Europe.

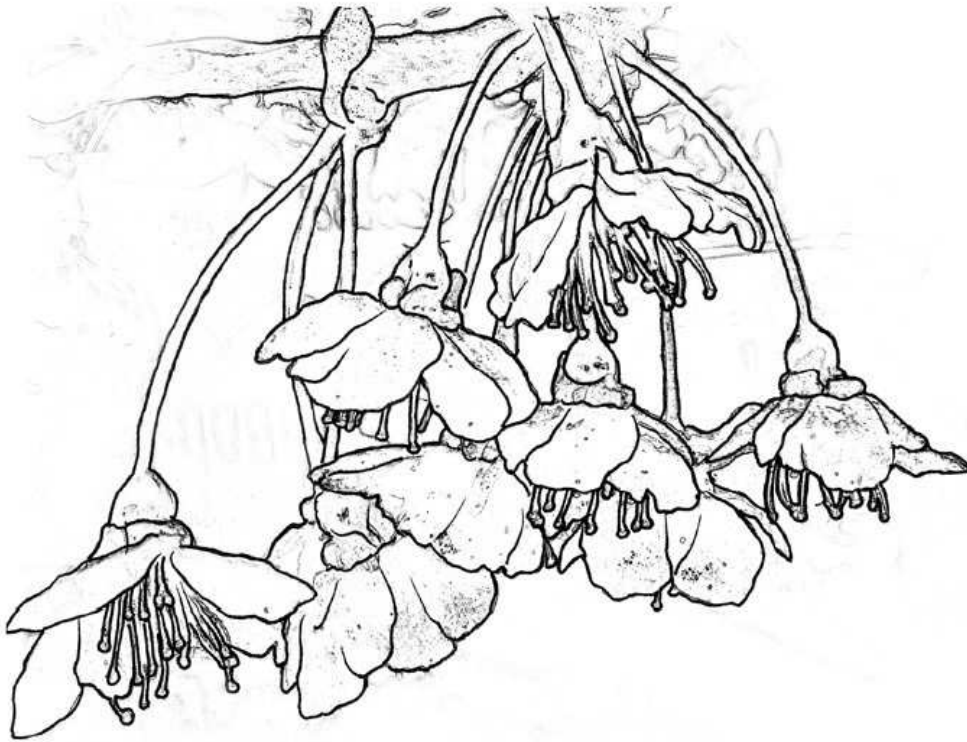
I headed this piece "A Nomadic Story". I calculate that to date, I have lived in 17 different homes and had attended some 12 schools which may be a slightly higher number than normal.

However, as I near the end of my story I am delighted to note that Judy and I, who only knew each other for a week when I proposed to her, recently celebrated our 52nd wedding anniversary. We are blessed with our two children and six grandchildren who all give us so much pleasure and joy.

March 2020



***Judy and Gordon
wedding photo 7th Jan
1968***



Wild Cherry

My Story
by
Stuart P



My Jewish Family History

This is the remarkable story of my grandparents, parents and my personal Jewish history. I shall present this history chronologically, starting with my paternal and maternal grandparents, ending with my own current Jewish life and experience.

My paternal grandparents

My paternal grandfather, Moishe Pinkinsky was born in Germany. He lived in what is now Lithuania but was, in the 19th Century, an integral part of Russia. He was reported to be a huge round-shouldered man with a long, red beard and a peculiar fierceness of gesticulation, which belied the essential gentleness of his nature. I see similarities to Tevye and the poignant story of 'Fiddler on the Roof'. Marc Chagall used the Fiddler image in many of his paintings to depict Jewish survival in a life that, for Jews at the time, was both unpredictable and very frightening.

Moishe was a peddler. He worked in a Lithuanian/Russian village trying to make a living at a time of Jewish repression and, ultimately, savage anti-Semitism. This was epitomised by the progressively ruthless Russian pogroms at the end of the 19th Century. By the end of 1897, the Russians were burning Jewish homes and businesses to the ground. My grandfather and his community had no option but to leave.

Some of Moishe's relatives had already left Russia and settled in New York. His plan was to cobble together his modest savings in order to sail to New York and join them. However, the navigation equipment failed and he ended up sailing into Edinburgh instead, where he had to start a new life.

Sophia Pinkinsky was born in Lomza, Poland. It is not clear whether Moishe already knew Sophia from their Russian village, or whether they met in Edinburgh. She was eight years younger than Moishe and the one available photo shows her wearing a characteristic black dress, with her head covered in a shawl, as was typical of the orthodox Jewish community at the time. She was a very petite woman, dwarfed by the height and bulk of her husband.

Moishe and Sophia spoke in Russian and Yiddish. Between 1900 and 1921, Sophia gave birth to 9 children – 6 sons and 3 daughters. My father, Philip, was the youngest of nine, born on 25 June 1921. The family lived most of their lives in an Edwardian terraced house,

2 miles south of the centre of Edinburgh.

Moishe and Sophia's oldest son, Abe, was born in December 1900. He owned a shop in Edinburgh. He had an eye for non-Jewish women. His father, Moishe, strongly disapproved. When one of Abe's sisters 'exposed' Abe's relationship to their father, Abe was 'banished' from the family, in the ultra-religious tradition. Apparently, the whole family sat 'Shiva' for Abe – so very sad!, Abe eloped to the United States with his non-Jewish girlfriend. Sadly, none of us know any more about him or his subsequent family.

The second son, Nathan, known as Nat, was the educational 'black-sheep' of the family. He ran his own cotton towel business, but sadly, much of his life was challenged by poor health caused by severe diabetes and cardiovascular disease. He spent all his life with his spinster sister, Mary, continuing to live in the same Edwardian family house in Edinburgh, long after his parents had died. Apparently, like Abe, Nat also had a secret non-Jewish mistress!

Solly was the third son. He also owned a shop in Edinburgh, where he too, settled down with **his** non-Jewish girl friend!

Schmuel, the fourth son, was an extremely obese, but rather jolly GP. He left Edinburgh to start life as a GP in London. As far as I am aware, he never married.

There were three sisters Annie, Mary and Sul. All three sisters maintained the family religious tradition.

I know little of the oldest sister, Annie, other than she was married and had no children.

Aunty Mary was tall and thin. She taught in a school in Edinburgh. On Sundays she taught in the local Cheder. Like her sister, Sul, Mary was a Jewish scholar. She never married. After her parents died, Mary continued to live with her brother Nat, in the same family house where she was born and raised.

Sul moved to London and lived in Finsbury Park. She was an obese woman, with a strong Edinburgh accent and a very sarcastic sense of humour. She taught at the Norwood Jewish orphanage where she met her husband, Ephraim. She had one son, Morris, with whom our family has lost contact, as Morris was so ultra-religious, he did not want to associate with us.

I knew both Mary and Sul when I was a little boy. I found them both to be intimidating in their own fashion, probably because their religious way of life was totally alien to me.

I also found my eccentric Uncle Nat to be intimidating. Aged 10, I was sent to stay with him and

Aunt Mary in Edinburgh during the summer of 1966. I remember sitting in a huge armchair watching the 1966 world cup football on their ancient TV. I also remember their Edwardian house was so cold, even in June, that I needed a blanket to keep me warm. Whilst watching the football, I was eating a large Kosher chicken sandwich. Nat asked me what I would like to drink. I asked for a glass of milk. Nat went berserk! He yelled: 'Mary, the boy wants milk after meat! He doesn't know his 'milkiky' from his 'fleshiky'!!! Nat immediately phoned my mum and dad to elaborate on my ignorance. I thought he was stark raving bonkers and was absolutely terrified! The next day, Nat took me to the local open-air swimming pool. The water felt freezing, especially as I was so skinny. I remember the thermometer at the side of the pool was reading only 57F! I never made that 'milk after meat' mistake again – nor did I ever again visit my eccentric Uncle Nat!

That then leaves the two younger brothers – my Uncle 'Mike' (Meir Conrad) and my beloved father, Philip (Feivel).

Mike graduated from Edinburgh Medical School around 1939, just before the outbreak of WW2; he was seven years older than my dad. Mike was a trainee surgeon during the war years and therefore gained practical 'hands-on' experience well ahead of his time. He was a junior surgical registrar in the Edinburgh hospitals at the same time as my father was a medical student at Edinburgh. They were still living together in the family home. Mike went on to become a consultant surgeon in South Shields. He was also a lay preacher at the local synagogue. For his services to patients and the community, Mike was granted 'Freedom of the City of Newcastle'.

Jews were at best tolerated in the field of medicine as there were still rumblings of anti-Semitism. Mike and Philip therefore decided to change their surname. There were several eminent 'Pinkerton' physicians and gynaecologists holding various hospital consultant or professorial positions at that time. This was the catalyst for Mike and Philip to change their surname from 'Pinkinsky' to 'Pinkerton'.

It seems remarkable to me that Moishe, my grandfather, was able to raise, feed and educate nine children on an income derived from peddling his wares and communicating to potential buyers in a mixture of broken English and Yiddish. Moishe had received no college education, yet three of Moishe's sons became doctors and two daughters became teachers.

My sister, Gill, found a published anecdote regarding Moishe that we both found particularly

moving and poignant. This anecdote comes from a book written by Professor David Daiches, who grew up in Edinburgh at the same time as my grandfather.

Professor Daiches' book 'Two Worlds – An Edinburgh Jewish Childhood' movingly describes how Moishe and members of the Edinburgh Jewish community met at Edinburgh station to travel on the train to work. They chanted together their morning prayers on the train.

Professor Daiches writes:

'They had perfected a technique for getting train compartments to themselves; and even if they had not, it would have taken a hardy outsider to enter a compartment where a swaying, bearded figure stood chanting at the window. **Old Moishe Pinkinsky**, a huge, round-shouldered, red bearded man, scared off many a would-be interloper. However, his 'fierceness of gesticulation' belied the essential gentleness of his nature. Once, however, when the train was particularly crowded, a desperate latecomer did succeed in entering the train compartment occupied by Moishe and his companions. He sat in astonished silence while the treblers concluded their devotions and then listened, bewildered, as they talked to each other in Yiddish. But Moishe had a kind heart and felt sorry for this lost soul sitting opposite him. He took down a brown-paper parcel from the train rack and extracted from it a huge sandwich of black bread and chopped herring. This he broke in two, and, keeping half for himself, he handed the other half to the fearful gentile. 'NEM' (Yiddish for 'take'), he said kindly. The man's name was Mackenzie, an insurance agent. He later told this story to his friends in an Edinburgh bar. "I ate for dear life", he said, "and you know, it tasted damn good; some kind of caviar'.

This anecdote, told so eloquently by Daiches, was part of the Edinburgh Jewish folklore that evolved in Edinburgh in the first quarter of the 20th Century. It paints a vivid picture of a now 'far away' world of an entrepreneurial, wandering, devout Jew – a living example of Darwinian mantra of 'survival of the fittest'. This deeply religious man, ultra strict in his parenting, was kind and compassionate to his friends and the local community. He was supported, unwaveringly and devotedly, by his long-suffering wife, Sophia. This was the essence of Moishe Pinkinsky. His children, grandchildren and great grandchildren are his legacy.

My mum, Hilda, is now 98. Remarkably, she was able to remember much of her family history and her own upbringing. This is her account.

Mum's father, Julius Fisher, left his native Poland before the start of the pogroms towards the end of the 19th Century. He came to England with his parents, two brothers and sister. Julius's father owned two confectionery/tobacconist shops in London's East End. Julius went to evening classes to learn English and planned to run his own business.

Shortly after the outbreak of WW1, Julius and his family were evacuated from London to Brighton. He travelled from Brighton to London each morning to open his father's shop and serve the customers. En route to the East End, he used to walk past the Royal Mint. This gave him the idea of changing his name from Fisher to Minter.

Hilda's maternal grandfather, David Todelis, was born in 1868 in Poland. According to my Mum, on emigrating to the UK, David apparently said to his cousin 'we are going to be freed men. Let's change our name from Todelis to Freedman'. David integrated into the London Jewish community where he met and married Sarah.

***David and Sarah
freedman my
maternal
grandparents***



David, Sarah and their family were also evacuated from London to Brighton at the beginning of WW1. Their second daughter, Evelyn, (Eva), was Hilda's mum (my grandmother). Eva was born in 1898, so was 16 years old at the outbreak of the war.

Eva's parents owned a tailor's shop on City Road in London. David was a tailor and worked at the back of the shop. Sarah ran the haberdashery at the front of the shop, assisted by Eva.

Eva travelled to London each morning to open the haberdashery part of the shop. Rather analogous to Moishe Pinkinsky's companions 'taking over' a train compartment at Edinburgh Waverley, the London/Brighton Jewish brigade also 'adopted' their own carriage on the train. This, according to my mum, was how and where her future parents, Julius and Eva, met.

Julius and Eva settled in Streatham, South London. They had three children – Minnie, my mum, (Hilda) and Alan. With Julius and Eva busy running their shops in London, their Nanny, Molly, raised the children. My mum was inseparable from her elder sister Minnie and they both loved Molly. There was only 14 months' age difference between the two sisters. Molly dressed them similarly and took them out to the local parks to meet and play with other children. In the evening, she fed and bathed them together.



***My maternal Grand-father., Julius Minter with
my Mum's brother , Alan Minter***



***My Mum (left) her sister, Minnie (right),
and baby brother Alan. Going to the
beach - Summer 1926***

Tragically, Minnie became ill, aged 6, with TB meningitis, for which there was no cure, and sadly

died. As if it were not awful enough for poor Eva to bury her own child, she then had to look after her husband, Julius, who also contracted TB a few months later. He died less than three months after the death of his beloved child, Minnie. Eva was left, on her own, to run the family shops, having lost within one year her husband and eldest daughter.

For reasons Hilda never understood, Nanny Molly, whom she loved, was sent away. Eva took Hilda with her to the shops. She refused to send Hilda to school, believing she could teach her at home. The school authorities eventually compelled Eva to send Hilda to school. She was sent to Gordon Hall High School, next to Russell Square.

Eva kept a Kosher home, so Hilda was sent to school each day with her egg or cheese sandwiches. She craved the school lunch meatballs, but was given no money and forbidden to eat with the other pupils. To get back at her mother, Hilda frequently threw her sandwiches down the toilet. She therefore ate nothing between breakfast and dinner. Eva never understood why she was such a skinny child!

Meanwhile Eva met a commercial traveller, Leo Bloom, who came from Manchester. He came to her shop to sell novelty goods. Leo started going out with Eva and bought Hilda presents every time he visited. One day, he said to Hilda: 'Would you like me to be your Daddy?' Hilda said 'No – I only want your presents!' Unperturbed, Leo married Eva. They moved from Bloomsbury to a new home in Stamford Hill.



**LEO BLOOM – MUM'S STEP-FATHER –
MY GRANDMA, EVA'S SECOND HUSBAND**



**LEO AND EVA BLOOM – MY MATERNAL
GRANDMA WITH HER SECOND HUSBAND**

Hilda's grandmother, Sarah, wanted the best for Hilda, so she paid the fees for Hilda to move to

Skinner's School for Girls in Stamford Hill. From her new home, Hilda was able to walk to Skinner's and made lots of friends. On leaving school, she went to secretarial college for six months and then got a job in a stockbrokers' office in Bishopsgate. But, war was threatening in the summer of 1939. Hilda was told that the office was planning to evacuate from London to Oxford. She therefore urged her Mum to leave London, and move to Oxford. The family would then be safer and Hilda would be able to continue working for the stockbroking firm.

How and where my parents met



MUM AND DAD AROUND 1952 IN DUMFRIES



MUM AND DAD GOING FOR A STROLL WITH MY SISTER, GILL'S CHILDREN, JOE AND HANNAH – LATE SUMMER 1984

In summer 1939, my mum was staying with her Jewish Dutch pen friend, 'Nannie', in Amsterdam. She invited Nannie to come back with her to stay in London for a holiday.

While Hilda was in Amsterdam, Eva invited cousins for Shabbat dinner. They mentioned to her that one of their relatives was coming to London from Edinburgh for a short visit. This 'relative' turned out to be my father, Philip. He was staying with his sister, Sul. Sensing the possibility of a 'match' for Hilda, Eva invited, amongst others, Philip and Sul for a 'Jewish deli' tea. Apparently, Philip really enjoyed Eva's pickled cucumbers and complimented her on her cooking. Eva therefore thought my dad, Philip, was lovely! She wanted him to meet Hilda on her return from Amsterdam, before Philip went back to Edinburgh to start his medical studies.

On returning home with her friend, 'Nannie', Eva told Hilda about her meeting with Philip. She

wanted to arrange another 'tea' for them all to meet. However, on the suggested afternoon, Hilda had planned to take Nannie to visit Regents' Park Zoo. So, Eva suggested they all meet at the Zoo. A 2pm meeting time was agreed. By 2pm, there was no sign of Philip and his family. Eva sent Hilda to a nearby phone box to ring and find out if they were still coming. Hilda went to the phone box, inserted a coin and rang Sul's home phone number – no reply. Seconds later, a 'brash young man' with a broad Scottish accent knocked on the telephone booth. 'Get your money back out of the phone – I'm Philip – we are here!'

After seeing the animals they all went to the café in the Zoo for tea. Before going their separate ways, Philip gave Hilda a 'green visiting card' with his name and address on it and 'told' her to write to him. Hilda thought Philip was far too cocky and, unlike her mum, didn't like him. She did not keep in touch.

In September 1939, Philip started his medical studies in Edinburgh, just at the outbreak of the war. The following year, just before Rosh Hashanah, Eva nudged Hilda to send a Jewish New Year card to Philip and his family. To Hilda's surprise, Philip replied - and they started writing to each other.

During the Blitz, Hilda's stepfather, Leo, was commuting from Oxford to London to work at his shop. On arrival one day, the shop had been bombed and reduced to rubble. Leo was devastated and returned to Oxford in a state of shock. Money was tight and there was already food rationing. Leo tried to obtain some local work in Oxford, but had a longstanding heart condition. He sadly died of a heart attack in 1942, leaving Eva widowed - again. With the money Eva inherited from Leo's death, she bought the home she was renting and made some income by renting out some of the rooms. My mum had now lost her father, stepfather, (of whom she had become very fond), and sister.

In the summer of 1943, Eva and Hilda went away for a break to the only Kosher hotel in Cliftonville. As the restaurant was very busy, Eva was asked if she minded sharing a table with a Mr. and Mrs. Malley – a Jewish couple from Ilford. Mr. Malley was a scientist, working secretly for the government - sponsored '**PipeLine Under The Ocean**' project (PLUTO). The pipeline was to carry vital oil supplies under the English Channel to British forces in France after the planned D Day landings. The Malleys became very friendly with Eva and Hilda. As they had a couple of spare rooms in their home in Ilford, they offered Hilda accommodation, should she ever wish to spend time in London.

Later that same summer, Philip wrote to Hilda saying he had a week's leave and wanted to visit her in Oxford. Although apprehensive, Hilda agreed. She arranged with her mum for Philip to stay in her bedroom, whilst she moved out to stay in the neighbouring street with her Auntie Bessy, her late father's sister. Hilda planned each day of Philip's stay, taking him to exhibitions, art galleries, a tour of the Oxford colleges and a day trip to London. By the end of the week, she had grown to like him, despite her initial negative first impressions. Philip returned to Edinburgh to complete his medical studies. As it was wartime, he had to complete his studies in only 4 years instead of 6! He graduated in December 1943.

In January 1944, Philip was called up to serve as a medical officer in the army. He was stationed in Southampton. He needed to have an officer's uniform made for him. Hilda was invited to Edinburgh to help choose the uniform and to meet Philip's now elderly, frail mum, Sophia. When Philip introduced Hilda to his mum, she eyed Hilda up and down, felt her arms and turned to Philip saying in Yiddish: 'TOO SKINNY.'

When he was off duty, Philip spent his time visiting Hilda in Oxford. During 1944, they grew closer together. At the courtesy of the Malleys, Hilda and Philip spent a weekend together at the Malley's home in Ilford. Although Hilda's memory is vague, she thinks that it may have been during that weekend that Philip announced (in typical Philip style)– 'I think we should get married'. He clearly was not the most romantic or subtle of boyfriends! Hilda recalls she was then left to choose her own engagement ring!

Towards the end of 1944, a wedding was organised in a small hotel in Oxford, presided over by the local Rabbi. There was stringent food rationing, but Eva managed to hoard food for the wedding; she organised and provided all the catering. Most of Eva's family attended, but only Philip's brother, Schmuell, was able to attend from his side of his family; Philip's father had died and his mother was too frail.

In February 1945, Hilda became pregnant with her first child. David was born on 2nd November 1945 in a maternity unit in Oxford.

Just a few months prior to David being born, my dad was summoned to meet with his commanding officer in Southampton. 'Pinkerton, you have done an excellent job here, looking after the shell-shocked patients, returning from the front. I heard from your medical school in Edinburgh that you achieved a distinction in your psychiatry studies. We want to post you to the Crichton Royal Hospital in Dumfries, to take up a hospital registrar position, caring for the shell-shocked and psychiatrically ill patients.' My dad

asked 'Do I have a choice Sir? I really want to continue my medical studies in Paediatrics'. His commanding officer replied: 'Of course you have a choice; you can join the next platoon of troops being sent to Burma to fight the Japs!' Philip chose the option of the Crichton Royal!

In 1946, my mum, dad and baby David departed to a new life in Dumfries. Apart from her last 5 years living and working in Oxford, my mum was born, raised and worked in London. She had never lived in the countryside and had no wish to leave her family and local Jewish community. However, there was really no choice.

Initially, there was no hospital accommodation available, so a room was found in the local schoolteacher's cottage on a farm in the tiny hamlet, Cullcabock. The residents had never heard of Jews, let alone seen one! In the morning, the teacher's son, nicknamed 'Boysie', milked the cows and brought fresh milk and coal to the cottage and his younger sister, nicknamed 'Girlsie' brought freshly laid eggs.

Over the next three years, Mum and Dad moved four times, in search of more space and accommodation closer to the hospital. During the summer of 1948, mum became pregnant again. My sister, Gill, was born in the following April. Eventually, one of the hospital-owned cottages became vacant. This was much more convenient, as it was located adjacent to the hospital. The accommodation was also much more spacious, so David and Gill could now have their own rooms.

By 1951, aged 5, David had started at the local nursery school – 'Trotters' – run by two sisters; one was the teacher and the other, the cook. They loved having David, who they said was the brightest child in the class! David seemed very happy there; however, he has subsequently told me that he had no idea he was Jewish whilst living in Dumfries. There was no local Jewish community and no other Jewish children.

By 1952, Dad had been working at the Crichton Royal for 6 years. He had passed his higher membership qualifications and was eligible for a consultant psychiatrist appointment. A distant cousin, Ivan Leveson, (his son, Judge Brian Leveson, presided over the Leveson enquiry), was a consultant psychiatrist in Liverpool. He and Dad had maintained both written and phone contact, so, when a consultant child psychiatrist vacancy came up in Liverpool, Ivan let Dad know. Two consultant child psychiatrist opportunities were then available to Philip – this one in Liverpool and another one in Leeds. At that time, anti-Semitism was still prevalent in Leeds, with a

corresponding dearth of Jewish consultants. Philip therefore accepted the consultant psychiatrist appointment in Liverpool, having been given the 'heads up' by Ivan.

Once more, my Mum packed up the house and the family departed Dumfries for their new life in Liverpool.

The early years in Liverpool – a return to Jewish Life

Mum and Dad integrated quickly into Liverpool Jewish society, which had been so noticeably absent from their lives during the 7 years in Dumfries. They joined Princes Road United synagogue and my Mum joined the Women's' Institute Zionist Organisation (WIZO), becoming an active member. She made friends quickly through coffee mornings, charity events and synagogue social gatherings.

By autumn 1954, Mum observed that many of her friends were pregnant. Dad had no objection to a third child, so, although not absolutely planned, she became pregnant again. I was born on 10th July 1955.

My memories of my up-bringing, schooling and Jewish life in Liverpool

I have little recall of my early years in Liverpool, but do remember being looked after by Mum and two different au pairs.

When I was 4, I was sent to Carmel College Jewish nursery school. I hated it! On arrival, I was forced to wear a kippah that I kept taking off. Apparently, I cried all day. After a week of this fiasco, Mum realised this wasn't going to work, so she took me out of the school.

Soon after my 5th birthday, I started at Beechenhurst primary school, where I spent two very happy years. The teachers were very kind and although not a Jewish school, I made one Jewish friend there. We remain good friends to this very day.

Aged 7, I left Beechenhurst and was sent to the very formal and rather Victorian boys only school – Liverpool College. I was really unhappy there. I felt intimidated, both by the heavily restrictive discipline and a covert culture of bullying. The priorities were sport, especially rugby, the combined cadet force (CCF) and turning out well-spoken

young men. Academic performance was a secondary consideration.

There was a 'Jewish room', where the small group of Jewish boys met during the morning Christian assembly. A 'senior' Jewish boy was assigned the task of 'maintaining order and discipline' but at least in that forum, there was never any bullying.

In contrast, life at home was stable and loving. I was the 'baby' of the family and thoroughly spoilt. Mum kept a 'partially' Kosher home, where pork or seafood would never have been acceptable. I looked forward to Shabbat dinners. Dad would bring home sweets or chocolates. Mum would light the candles and Dad would (briefly and as quickly as possible!) sing the blessings for wine and bread. Then, we would eat a delicious dinner – usually home made chopped liver with cholla, home made chicken soup followed by either roast chicken or roast beef. Mum was a superb cook and an excellent, nurturing provider. I felt secure and loved in our Jewish home environment.

From a religious perspective, both Mum and Dad were very 'liberal' in their Jewish philosophy and beliefs - I suspect rebelling from their respective, strict Jewish upbringings. They only attended synagogue on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Mum seemed to be more concerned with what suit and hat she would be wearing and next to whom she would be sitting and chatting. Dad was more interested in the melodic songs rather than any deep, religious or spiritual conviction. When I was older he openly admitted he was agnostic - more a racial and cultural, rather than religious, Jew.

I do remember celebrating the Jewish festivals, especially Chanukah and Pesach. There was a Pesach rota – so, each year, we celebrated Pesach in different homes of my parents' friends, a ritual I really enjoyed.

In my younger years, I found Jewish life, as I knew it, to be rather good fun. I remember running around at my brother's Barmitzvah tea, which took place at what was then the very smart Adelphi Hotel. I was 3 years old and playing 'hide and seek' with my 'girlfriend' Diana Binns, crawling underneath the posh Adelphi tables. Mum gave us each a large box of Smarties to shut us up - but the chocolate sent us 'sky high'. We ran wild and were the 'light entertainment'.

On Sundays, I was forced to go to Cheder. The majority of my class went to the

Jewish King David School, where the Cheder classes were held. Therefore, as an outsider attending Liverpool College, I was not one of the Jewish clique - and I felt it! I tried to integrate, but failed to make any new Jewish friends there.

When I started Barmitzvah classes at Cheder, I really disliked being made to learn and perform all the Jewish rituals including the wearing of tefillin. It felt totally alien to me and made me feel very uncomfortable.

Furthermore, in order to learn my specific Barmitzvah portion, my parents arranged for me to have private lessons at home. I found my teacher to be very rigid and pedantic. Although he taught me my Barmitzvah portion well, he insisted I practise the wearing of tefillin and learn the true 'meaning' of my Barmitzvah piece, in neither of which I had any interest. I enjoyed learning and singing my portion, but I just couldn't accept what I perceived to be a blind following of tradition and felt the need to 'push back' against it.

In July 1968, I celebrated my Barmitzvah. I sang the house down in front of friends and family, enjoying the sense of occasion and 'holding an audience'. For me, 'Barmitzvah graduation' was more a case of 'job done' – collect the presents, write the 'thank-you' cards and move on with my life; **not**, as my rabbis hoped, a 'rite of passage' to a new Jewish traditional life, in which I had no interest and no intention of pursuing.

After my Barmitzvah, I actually found Mum and Dad's liberal Jewish values to be rather hypocritical! On High Holy days, (even on Yom Kippur), I would arrange to meet with my 'mates' during a breakout period. We would risk walking around the rather dubious Caribbean 'no-go' areas of Liverpool 8, in order to find a sweet shop to buy 2 ounces of wine gums or sherbet lemons! We would share out our collective purchases, sheepishly return to the synagogue and furtively suck on our sweets. To this day, I don't know whether Mum or Dad knew where I was going and what I was doing.

Liverpool experienced a severe depression during the late 60's and 70's, causing many Jewish families to leave for either Manchester or London. My family stayed in Liverpool so, I spent many weekends going over to discos and parties in Manchester with my friend, Larry, 'looking for Jewish talent'! As Scousers, we felt like outsiders to the Manchester Jewish scene, as it was difficult to 'break in' to their social cliques. I dated a few Jewish girls who lived in Manchester, but never seriously; it actually all felt rather depressing.

In 1982, after completing my medical degree and various hospital and GP post-graduate training jobs, I left Liverpool to take up my first pharmaceutical industry job as a medical adviser. I worked for the Dutch multi-national, Organon laboratories, based at their UK offices in Morden, Surrey.

Organon was a specialist, steroid-based company, with a focus on developing oral contraceptive steroids and steroid-containing medicines. I was fascinated by the history of the company. Saul von Schwannenburg was Jewish - a chemist by education and a butcher by trade. He escaped Nazi Germany in the mid 1930's to set up a new life in Holland. He was a deeply curious man and hated waste. So, having sold off all his meat cuts and offal, he was intrigued as to whether the remaining gonads could have any value. He ran the gonads through his ancient liquidiser that he used to make 'Jewish soup'.

Deeply intrigued by the straw-like fluid that emerged, he had the creativity and insight to collect the fluid extracted from the gonads and have it analysed in a local laboratory. The resultant analysis confirmed that the straw-like fluid contained a high concentration of steroids. This was the catalyst for Saul establishing Organon as a steroid-based pharmaceutical company, of which he became chairman and CEO. Organon has produced many oral contraceptives and hormones, which are still used today.

I was fascinated, deeply moved and inspired by the bravery and entrepreneurial spirit of this Jewish butcher, chemist and founder of the company I was now joining.

I rented a flat in Wimbledon Village close to the office. However, I found out that most of the Jewish social events took place in North London. I was never able to 'break into' this social scene because I felt that I was regarded, disparagingly, as a 'Scouser' living in 'alien' South London. With most of my friends still back in Liverpool and after a fairly lonely and isolated year in London, I had no regrets when Organon announced their office re-location to Cambridge. In February 1983, I left London for a new life in Cambridge.

Life in Cambridge

Initially, I knew nobody in Cambridge for the first few weeks. I then met my future wife, Lesley, at a post-graduate, Intervarsity Club social event. She had recently relocated from Eastbourne to Huntingdon following a promotion for a medical dressings company. We started to chat and agreed to meet a few days later for a game of badminton.

I can't remember how and when Lesley found out I was Jewish. It must have slipped out in conversation and Lesley was clearly interested and deeply curious. I had, by now, discovered that I really didn't enjoy the Jewish scene and therefore neither wanted any part of it nor to talk about it.

Lesley's upbringing was very different. She told me she came from a Christian family, (her father had wanted to become a C of E vicar), and she had sung in the local Kent church choir. Lesley was a keen sportswoman and had become the number 2 female windsurfer in the country.

What did this petite, pretty, very sporty and athletic ex-Kent choirgirl see in me? What did this spoilt, immature, non-sporty, Jewish doctor from Liverpool see in her? I was, in retrospect, seeking to escape my Jewish roots and upbringing.

Between 1983 and 1985 Lesley and I spent a lot of time together – walking, talking, drinking and eating. About this time, my parents moved to Chigwell to retire. They joined the Reform Synagogue where they felt much more comfortable and aligned than in the United synagogue they attended in Liverpool.

By January 1986, Lesley had become very interested in Judaism, in contrast to my own indifference. For all the reasons I have explained, I wanted to 'break away' from my heritage and '**marry out**'. In contrast, Lesley wanted to 'break away' from her heritage, '**marry-in**' and convert to Judaism – what a paradox!

Tragically, after only 2 years of enjoying retirement, Dad became very ill with gall-bladder cancer. In the first week of February 1986, Dad was admitted for surgery to remove his gall bladder. His surgeon told me he had found my Dad's tumour to be inoperable, with extensive spread. The prognosis was very poor - with a 6-month life expectancy. I was totally shocked and devastated. For me, this was a defining moment.

After some deep reflection and soul-searching, I made my decision. I had this romantic

notion to propose to Lesley on Valentines' Day, but I couldn't pluck up the courage. The next evening, we were going out for a Chinese meal. On her arrival at my flat, I proposed to Lesley in the doorway and she accepted without hesitation. The first person we told was our Chinese waiter in the restaurant!

Lesley wanted to convert and we were now engaged. Mum and Dad recommended we have discussions with their Reform synagogue rabbi in Chigwell. He was very 'off-hand', saying to Lesley she should go away and do a lot more reading before he would consider accepting her onto any conversion class. We were both surprised and upset.

I then asked the advice of the Cambridge University rabbi. The small Cambridge Jewish community was traditional, so he recommended we contact the Liberal synagogue in Woodford. We met the friendly and charming Rabbi Neil Kraft – a New Yorker living in London. He and his community made us feel very welcome. Neil invited us to his home after the first Shabbat service we attended. He offered us cake and drinks, saying to Lesley: 'the first thing you need to know and understand about being Jewish is the importance of food and community in a Jewish home.'

Surprisingly, I enjoyed the Liberal service, finally feeling a sense of Jewish belonging. Neil offered Lesley a place on his conversion course that she was very keen to accept. I told Mum and Dad about this new sequence of events and they were, of course, delighted. Around this time, Lesley became pregnant. We decided to get married in Cambridge Registry Office. We set a date of 24th May 1986 in the hope my Dad might have a short remission following radiotherapy. It was a pleasant late spring day. I was so relieved Dad was able to attend along with Mum, and Lesley's parents. Our fathers witnessed and signed the Registry Book, after which we enjoyed a delightful family lunch.

WEDDING PHOTO. MY MUM, DAD, WIFE, LESLEY AND HER PARENTS, JOHN AND JOSIE – 24th MAY 1986.



In July, Mum and Dad organised a large tea for family and friends to join us in

celebrating our wedding.

Sadly, Dad's illness worsened, after a short remission. Our first daughter, Fiona, was born on 4th November 1986. During our last visit to see Dad, he was able to hold and cuddle the baby. Dad died 3 weeks later. Mum then came to stay with us in our 2nd floor flat in Cambridge, to help Lesley with Fiona while I was working. With no lift, it was quite a challenge getting the pram up two flights of stairs!

By year-end, I had taken on a new European Clinical Research position with the Pharmaceutical Company, Syntex, based in Maidenhead. So, in one year, Lesley and I had encountered the main 'stressors' in life – bereavement, childbirth, new job and new home!

Lesley transferred her Jewish studies from Woodford Synagogue to Maidenhead Reform Synagogue, under the supervision of Rabbi Jonathan Romain. She made a career change -training as a primary school teacher. She also took a very active part in synagogue life; after successfully converting by the end of 1987, she started teaching in the Cheder. I joined the synagogue Choir becoming one of the inaugural members. I could never have thought that possible before I met Lesley.

We decided to have a Jewish marriage in Maidenhead synagogue, to be presided over conjointly by Rabbis Romain and Kraft. We invited all our friends and family to what was a joyous celebration. Having little Fiona join us under the Chuppah was especially moving.



***JEWISH WEDDING FAMILY
PHOTO – MAY 1988. FROM
LEFT TO RIGHT: MY MUM,
HILDA, GRANDMA, EVA, ME
HOLDING FIONA, LESLEY,
HER DAD, JOHN, MUM,
JOSIE AND MY BEST MAN,
NEIL.***

Lesley threw her heart and soul into being Jewish and keeping a Jewish home. This caused some friction as I had long since abandoned the Jewish dietary laws and Lesley

had become vegetarian after her conversion. My 'Chinese take-aways' had to be eaten with separate knives and forks. 'Left-overs' had to be kept in a separate section of the fridge. Ironically, I started to feel as though Judaism had come back to 'bite me on the bum'.

In March 1989, our second daughter, Becky, was born and we had settled comfortably into life in Maidenhead. In 1994, when both our daughters were in primary school, my company was bought out and taken over by Roche. I was offered, and accepted, a new role as their Medical Director. Unfortunately however, from July 1995, this position was to be based in Welwyn Garden City.

Around the same time, Lesley was pregnant with our third daughter, Susannah. I therefore had to commute from Maidenhead to Welwyn Garden City. This commute was punishing, so eventually, we decided to take advantage of a relocation package. We moved to Hertfordshire in July 1996. After 6 months of renting, we purchased a converted barn, 3 miles North of St. Albans where our family lived for 14 years.

All 3 of our daughters had Batmitzvahs in Radlett Reform Synagogue, which we joined after leaving Maidenhead. Lesley became a primary school teacher in the newly formed Clore Shalom Jewish School in Shenley. We socialised with members of both the Radlett Reform and St. Albans Masorti community.



**MY DAUGHTERS ON MY 60TH
BIRTHDAY.**

When Fiona and Becky left home to go to university, we decided to downsize and

moved into St. Albans in June 2010. The children were becoming progressively independent and, as so often happens in marriages, Lesley and I found we wanted different things. As retirement years approached, Lesley wanted to spend her time in the mountains, skiing in the winter and climbing in the summer. I wanted a more relaxed life in the sunshine.

We tried very hard, but just couldn't reconcile our different wants and needs. We went our separate ways in March 2015, after 32 years together. Once the divorce legalities were completed, Lesley moved to Chamonix, to a life in the mountains with her new partner, enjoying the out-door life of skiing and climbing. After a while, I met, ironically (!), a Jewish partner, Sue, with whom I share liberal Jewish values. We have many common interests, including all aspects of the performing arts – theatre, opera, ballet and music. Rather predictably, we also share culturally associated interests in good food and dining out!

My eldest daughter, Fiona, married Gareth on 12th August 2016 in France. Remarkably, like his mother-in-law, Lesley, Gareth also converted to Judaism! Lesley and I were both proud to attend his conversion 'graduation' in the autumn of 2014. We happily walked our daughter down the aisle in the beautiful grounds of a French chateau. Gareth built the Chuppah and our friends and family attending the wedding enjoyed a joyous, long weekend in the Dordogne. Fiona and Gareth's daughter, Isla, was born on 13th November 2017.

Final thoughts and reflections.

This journey into my ancestry started with my grandparents leaving their homes to escape anti-Semitism and set up a new life in a relatively tolerant, multi-cultural country. My parents endured several enforced geographical upheavals before settling in Liverpool where they enjoyed practising their own brand of Judaism. I was privileged to have experienced a liberal Jewish upbringing in relatively affluent circumstances, for which I am very grateful.

My Jewish journey was, at times, both troubled and confused. History tends to repeat itself. Three of my paternal uncles had serious relationships with non-Jewish women, thus rejecting their parents' wishes. I found the approach to Judaism of my own parents

to be somewhat hypocritical, ultimately epitomised by my wish to 'marry-out' and cut my 'Jewish umbilical cord'. Interestingly, my sister, Gill, chose not to follow a Jewish way of life. I therefore cannot help but wonder whether there is a common psychological thread running through my family, kicking back against our historically rigid Jewish traditions, and discovering our own values and culture.

My partner, Sue and I have discussed this interesting pattern many times - how it links the 'here and now' to the 'there and then.' I am therefore very grateful to her (and her endless patience!), for facilitating my ultimate acceptance and appreciation of my Jewish roots and heritage. It's been one hell of a journey!

Despite its challenges, I look back on the many happy years of my marriage and have been blessed with three, healthy, loving daughters. My Jewish ancestry is set to continue.

It has taken me many years to appreciate Ralph Waldo Emerson's quote: 'life is a journey not a destination. The challenge is to enjoy the roller-coaster ride'.



My Story **by** **Martin R**



I'm Just Sitting Here, Reminiscing

Memories - Aah! I could go back further, but reminiscences are from your own past, so they'll be what I'll stay with. My first ones are actually from early school, but more of that soon. Just a bit of pre-natal information.

I've spent many an hour researching my family tree, and can go back around 4 generations (not in any great detail, as most of them were born in Eastern Europe), so I'll give a brief account of those I actually knew.

My mother's father was born in New York. He was, I think the fourth child. Strangely and wholly inexplicably, children 1 and 2 were born in Spitalfields, my grandpa and his elder sister were born in New York, and his younger siblings were born back in Spitalfields. My only guess is that his parents emigrated and for whatever reasons didn't like it, or couldn't afford it, so returned to England. His parents were originally from Holland, and they worked as cigar makers. Apparently, there were two cigar factories in Spitalfields. He was born in 1874, and died in 1958, and I remember him well, especially as he lived only four houses from ours. His wife died before I was born. He re-married and we called his second wife our Aunt. He worked for the United Synagogue Burial Society as a Bearer, as did one of his sons, my uncle. We had many stories of what went on at Waltham Abbey Cemetery, as well as the older ones, such as Plashet and Marlow Road, East Ham, which were full, but still open for relatives to visit. My step-Aunt worked for the Western Synagogue and she made shrouds at home. Many a time I would go up and see her in the box-room and be confronted by what must have been hundreds of shrouds stuffed into every corner. My mother's sister also lived with them. She was unmarried at the time and treated my brother and I like we were her own children. She was very loving and very generous.

My
grandparents
(My fathers'
parents)



My father's father was born somewhere in Poland or maybe it was Russia, since the border was moved around a lot. He was a Kosher butcher, and his father before him was too. He had a shop in Old Bethnal Green Road, which I remember visiting a few times. He married in 1899 in the old Great Synagogue in Leadenhall Street (which later moved to Egerton Road in Stamford Hill). He and his wife both lived until they were 97. Paradoxically, they mostly ate the cuts of meat that customers didn't buy, which were the fattiest joints, and they still lived to be 97! He couldn't read or write English, but could read Hebrew. His wife, my grandmother, was English, kept kosher but was otherwise not particularly religious. I remember them both well. They lived in St Albans for a while then moved back to Stamford Hill after the war. They seemed to row a lot, but looking back, it was almost certainly repartee, a way of winding each other up in a friendly way. Another thing I found strange was that although he was a religious man, went to synagogue two or three times a day, had a Board of Shechita Licence, and a Kosher butcher's shop, none of his children (I think there were 8) was religious, although all those that married (2 did not), had Jewish partners.

That reminds me that in those days, we visited relatives every weekend, and never arranged it in advance. We just showed up and it appeared that all those in our parents' parents' generation were always at home whenever we arrived. And if our visit coincided with someone else's, the more the merrier. There was always a cup of tea and cakes or biscuits. Very occasionally, we were given a little money (a threepenny bit or sixpence), which was so exciting. I remember venturing into the back room which was quiet and had a wind-up record player. The records were 78s, which meant they spun at 78 revolutions per minute. I still remember two of them. Suppé's Poet and Peasant Overture and a novelty Hawaiian song called Oua Oua by Kanui and Lula. You can hear it on Spotify and YouTube now. It was recorded in 1933.

One of my father's brothers lived south of the river in Walworth Road. It was the only time I ventured that far south. To this day, I know north London as well as any taxi driver, but take me over the river, I'm completely lost.

Some of the relatives we visited were really poor. One of my mother's uncles had bare cupboards, not even any biscuits and although we didn't have much to spare, my parents always left some money and a few necessities. Another Uncle had a wife who couldn't walk. She was very thin which was in a strange way fortunate, as he had to carry her everywhere, including up the stairs, and they couldn't go out out. So imagine their faces when we, or anyone, showed up.

After they were married, my parents lived in Stoke Newington



*They married in
Shacklewell Lane
Synagogue, Stoke
Newington/Hackney in
February 1942*

They then bought their own house, for about £850, in Palmers Green. Possibly worth about £575,000 now. This was during the war. Both my parents and I were war babies, they the First War, me the Second. My younger brother came along just after the war ended. My father was in a reserved occupation so was around to support my mother. I was born, I was always proud to say in WC1, in the Borough of St. Pancras. Actually, University College Hospital. My mother had a serious bout of pneumonia and could have died, but she survived. My father worked as an instrument maker just off York Way, between Caledonian Road and Kings Cross stations. He worked Monday to Friday and Saturday morning, as a 5½ day week was the norm then. I remember he travelled by bus and tube and almost always took a packed lunch of bread and jam sandwiches and a piece of fruit. Ever since I can remember, my mother worked full-time but not on a Saturday. For many years she travelled to the East End, worked for a full day, then returned, usually with two heavy bags of shopping. She did secretarial work, but even so, she must have been very tired at the end of each day. As we grew older, my brother and I went to the Cambridge Roundabout, which was the nearest public transport came to our house, to meet her and help with the shopping bags.



From L to R, my mother's brother, John, my mother's mother, Sarah, who died before I was born, my father's sister Beattie, my mother's father Jack, and my mother's sister Millie.

Now for some real memories. One of the earliest was going to Oakthorpe infants' school in Tile Kiln Lane in Edmonton. I think I started in September 1947. There were probably about 30 in the class, and this number and my school mates remained virtually unchanged until we all left the Junior School on the same site seven years later. Most remarkably, I am still friends with a girl who shared my class throughout, Janet. So, except for my brother, she is the one person I have known the longest. I think the first months or maybe the whole of the first year was characterised by playing and being told stories, but it wasn't long before we started to learn to read. We had a series of soft-back books, with largish print, which we had to read out loud. I picked up the idea quickly, but a few children had great difficulty, and were probably highly embarrassed that they couldn't keep up. We had no idea then, but this was probably what we now know as dyslexia. One of these reading books was called "Black Sambo", and was, in hindsight, very politically incorrect, but attitudes and morals were very different then, and it never occurred to anyone until many years later. I was quick on the uptake with reading, but I remember one embarrassing time we were asked to read out loud in front of the class. I came across the name "Cinderella" and pronounced the "C" as a "K"!

Both in Infants and in Juniors we had “assembly” in the morning before the start of class. I don’t remember any exclusion because of religion. When they sang a hymn, I just kept quiet - I didn’t know the words, anyway! But “All things Bright and Beautiful” seemed non religious, so I joined in. The headmistress (and in the Juniors, the Headmaster) gave a sort of sermon and then we filed back to our classrooms. I remember most, if not all my teachers, and looking back, they were good at their job.

In the infants, we sat in rows of chairs, not at tables. In the juniors we were streamed into A and B groups. Teachers were kind although strict and it was fun to learn. There were letter charts on the walls, lower case, upper case and joined up writing as you got older. We had playtime mid-morning as well as lunchtime. Not sure about afternoons, as we left to go home about 3.30 pm. There were times tables on one wall and charts to fill in as you progressed. We stayed in the same classroom for all lessons except PE.

I don’t know why but School Dinners remained in my memory for all these years. I think we sat in tables of 12 with 5 along each side, and a “Monitor” at one end. It was lunch, why was it called dinner? It was called dinner “hour” but was probably longer than an hour, as afterwards, we went into the playground. The “dinner ladies” served us after we had formed a queue. We were allowed to talk, and later in life I could never understand why some schools enforced a silence regime during the meals. Surely chatting over a meal is one of the most sociable things you could do. I think most people remember their school dinners, if for nothing else but the usual revolting items. In my case, these were tapioca, which everyone called Frog’s spawn, and rice pudding. I’ve never been able to face either of these two since that day! There was also heaps (literally) of mashed potato, lots of greens, both of which I still like and sometimes gristly meat. You had to stay until you ate everything up, which was also eligibility for obtaining “seconds” if they had anything left over. I don’t remember anything that was supposed to be hot, not being so. The food was delivered every day in large aluminium containers by a local removal company and what little was surplus I was told went to a pig farm. There was only one sitting and I may be wrong but I don’t think the meal was accompanied by a drink. At about 11 am each morning we were given a third of a pint of silver-top milk with a straw. I’m not sure this was true for the whole time I was at Oakthorpe, but dinners cost 7d a day, or 2/11d a week at one time, and we all took our dinner money in on a Monday

morning. Some children at the same time bought National Savings stamps. No-one brought sandwiches or any form of packed lunch - it was unheard of then. The teachers had their meals in their staff room.



. I'm in the middle of the lower row and the girl at the right of the top row with a bit of a scowl, is Janet Milne, who I'm still friendly with

In our final year of Juniors, in which we took our 11+, we were tested monthly. That meant that every month we changed classroom seats according to our position in the test totals. That meant those with the highest score sat along the back row, which was four lots of double desks, and so on in rows to the front. It must have been chaotic as we all had to change our desk contents too. Teachers would shout at you if you did anything wrong but you mostly didn't dare although the cane existed for naughty people, and was delivered by the headmaster. Our teacher would bang his ruler down hard on the desk if he thought anyone was out of line and we all sat up straight to that. There were lots of quizzes which may explain why I love them now. You were addressed by your first name, not surname, we had a cloakroom and pegs for our coats and no school uniform at Oakthorpe. I remember walking to school at a very young age. In the infants there were a few parents outside for very young infants but you wanted to be grown up and walk which was usually with friends and there was very little traffic about. Except for my brother and I who had to cross the North Circular Road. But on most days there was policemen there to stop the traffic. School toilets were in outside buildings and freezing in winter so there was little incentive to go other than playtimes or maybe we just didn't as it would have been odd at the time for someone to leave class. The impression I formed of my teachers was that they knew everything about everything, and I respected them enormously.

We had PE lessons in the hall with rudimentary gym equipment and we changed into plimsolls for this. I suppose I was an academic child as I hated PE and ever since have thought all sports to be irrelevant and boring. We had music lessons on mainly percussion instruments such as triangles, castanets, clappers, and tambourines and there was a yearly musical concert for all schools, that took place in Edmonton Town Hall. Not sure if everyone went or only if you were taking part. Playground time was fun. No fields at Oakthorpe but both juniors and infants had two playgrounds each so you only had two or three school years in each one. Boys and girls were mixed both in class and in the playground. The maypole ritual in the infants was interesting. Must have been to celebrate Mayday and you could be a maypole dancer or gypsy, complete with costume. I have a photograph of myself dressed as a gypsy, complete with bandana. I also remember well the celebration of Empire Day on May 24th, during which every pupil was given an apple.

The shops near the school in Tile Kiln Lane/Chequers Way (actually called Chequers Parade) were a café with Tizer adverts at the bottom of each window, a cobbler on the corner, Zeitman the kosher butchers, a deli with no name but known as Jack's, and his wife was called Bubbles (a Jewish couple). Every square inch of the shelves was crammed with goods from floor to ceiling. The other shop was a sweet shop., which was also a post office, and where maybe once or twice a week we would go and spend pocket money on liquorice or chews, four for a penny.

On one side of the school there was a large house inhabited by an old man with a handlebar moustache. Rumours were around that there once was a toll gate there. On the other side after the juniors' playground there was a piano factory and past that, set in from the road there was a hut selling tea and buns. The buttered rolls were the best I have ever tasted. At the end of the road there was the Cinder Path which led to the Cambridge Roundabout past a very fast flowing and noisy weir between the path and the Cambridge Pub car park. Opposite the school on the other side of Pymmes Brook was the Co op complex with its dairy, bakery and laundry. Every so often a gush of noisy high pressure steam was ejected near to the bank. Occasionally foam would be seen along the brook. There was a green area in the juniors playground where we were encouraged to observe frogs spawn and tadpoles. There was a small wooden bridge there. It was a big day when we left that school, never to see most of my friends again. But there was excitement in the air as I had passed my 11+ and was destined for grammar school later in the year. But, that's another story.



Our wedding on 9th October 1966



***Camion. A wild pink flower blooming from April
to the end of the year***

My Story

by

Monica S



THE HEYMANS, ROSENBERG, MONTROSE, SHACKMAN FAMILY

My Mother's Story

Herta Juliane Montrose, nee Heymans was born in Essen Germany on 13/11/1926 and died in Cardiff on 15/11/99.

Herta and Dorsi



Her parents, my grandparents, (known as Oma and Opa) Wilhelmina (Mina) Sternberg DOB 06/10/1903 born in Germany and Carl (Karel) Heijmans DOB 21/05/1895 born in The Netherlands. Herbert Heymans, DOB 10/04/1929, (believe he died as a small child and there are no records to explain his death, why or when). Then came Doris DOB 28/08/1931 who died in Auschwitz on 28/01/1944.

Their married life began in Germany, however they moved to Holland in the late 1930's. They lived in Enschede, a town about 30 miles north east of Arnhem. For reasons my mother never understood they came to live in Enschede which was very close to the German border. They ran a very large textile factory making shirts.

The Beginning

Herta was the oldest of 3 children and had a good relationship with her sister, Doris until her untimely death in 1944. Her younger brother, Herbert was never mentioned so to all intents and purposes this was a family of four.

The War

When the war began, Holland was quickly occupied by the Germans and no Jewish children were allowed to go to school. Herta's education had been cut short. By October 1943, conditions for Dutch Jews who had not yet been sent to the Camps became desperate and frantic efforts were made to escape deportation and worse. Resistance organisations sprang into action and provided addresses where Jews could expect reasonably safe shelter.

The Jewish Council in Enschede was particularly active in organising for Jews to go "underground" unlike Councils in most other Cities, not least Amsterdam. This is why Herta survived while so many others perished.

Herta's family were separated and her Grandfather and her were billeted in Enschede but about 10 miles away from her parents. Her sister went to another address where she was later betrayed by a "patriotic" Dutchman. She was taken to Westerborg Camp and from there to Belsen and finally Auschwitz. She was never heard from again.

Wicher and Jantje Coelingh a poor childless couple who belonged to the strict Calvinistic Church felt that it was their duty to help persecuted Jews and they welcomed Herta, her grandfather and another elderly gentleman into their rented home and Herta was given her own room with a hard mattress and her grandfather shared another room with the elderly Jewish gentleman called Menco who died in the last year of the war. The house had only one tap for cold water in the kitchen and there was no toilet. Wicher worked as a silk weaver for the Rigtersbleek Company which Herta's father knew of through his work in the textile business. It was through his contacts there that he had located the Coelingh family and other hideouts for the various members of his family. Wicher and Jantje treated Herta like their own daughter, bestowing upon her much love and affection. They did everything to protect Herta and her grandfather but they never attempted to impose their religion on them. She was allowed to play religious music on their organ and participated in daily Bible readings, always reading from the Old Testament. The Coelingh's allowed them to live a life as normal as possible.

Wicher was sent to work in Germany. He followed the order rather than fleeing, which would have endangered his wife and Herta and her grandfather. Jantje therefore was left with the task of foraging for food at local farms on her bicycle with its wooden tyres and getting ration cards at the central kitchen. It was practically an impossible task to feed the four people on the miniscule rations offered to the Coelinghs.

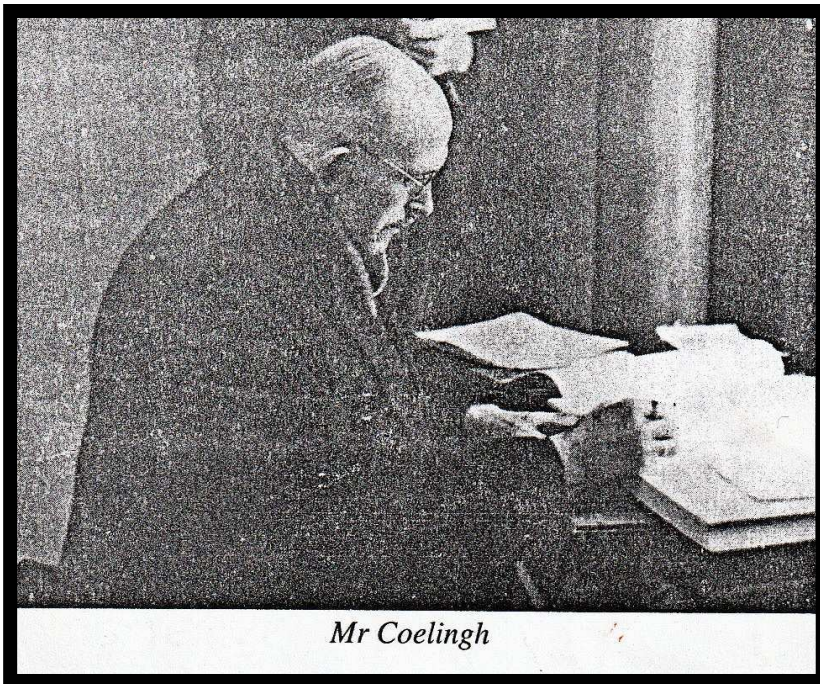
When Herta and her Grandfather moved in to the Coelinghs house in 1943, this was organised by the Dutch Underground Organisation. The financial arrangements were left to Herta's Father who took advice from the Jewish Council and he paid a weekly sum of money for both Herta and her grandfather. After the war Mr. Coelingh repaid every penny that he had received on a weekly basis. The rescuers motivation was totally a strong feeling of their religious beliefs as they were members of a very orthodox church.

Reunion



When Holland was liberated and Herta had found her parents again, she parted with sadness as she had been living with a wonderful couple who treated her like their own daughter. They remained in very close contact and were asked to be witnesses at the Civil Wedding Ceremony of Herta and her husband, Rudi in 1949. Sadly they died a couple of years later.

On 19 April, 1998 Yad Washem recognised Wicher and Jantje Coelingh as “Righteous Among Gentiles.



The Wedding

My parents were introduced shortly after the end of the war. Herta was working in the family business in the shirt factory in Enschede and it was decided that she should do a tailoring course in London. Somehow, (these details are very vague) she was put in touch with a lady in London who was also in the textile business and it was arranged that she would stay with her while attending the course. Arrangements were made for her to be collected at Liverpool Street Station by her son. I don't know how long the course was for but the son, Rudi was taken with his new house guest and began to teach her English and when she returned home to Enschede to live and work, this relationship began to bloom. A correspondence course continued and Rudi would send Herta's letters back with corrections made in the hope that this would improve her English. By January 1949 an Engagement was announced and the Chuppah took place on 25 December 1949 in Enschede. They had only met three times before committing to marry!!!! Herta Heymans and Rudi Rosenberg as they were known when they married, however on moving to Great Britain, my father had no desire to be addressed in his German sounding surname and translated it literally to Montrose by deed poll.

.Family Life.

After the wedding, life carried on in London where the happy couple were living with Mother in Law in Golders Green. Rudi was studying to become an Optician and once he had qualified he found a job in London. Not so long afterwards twins were born in May 1952 and space in the terraced house in Golders Green was at a premium. As luck would have it Rudi was offered a position as a Manager to run an Optical business in Cardiff. The bonus was that a house came with the position so it didn't take long to decide to move to Wales.

In 1954 a sister joined her brother and sister and family life became well established in Cardiff. Rudi and Herta became stalwarts of the Cardiff Reform Synagogue where they played a big part. Rudi was a member of the Chevrah Kadisha and Herta played her part in being a long serving member of the Ladies Guild.

As the years passed by, Herta became a member of the Samaritan organisation where she volunteered for over 20 years. She was very practical and sewed almost all the children's clothes as well as knitting. She also loved her garden.

As life went on their son and younger daughter, being more academic than their older daughter went to University and the older daughter went to college in Cardiff. London beckoned and Monica worked in various aspects of the Catering Trade. Michael, her twin was very gifted in languages and found a job as a Sales person for an Optical company which provided him with clients all over the world. He spoke 5 languages fluently. Yvonne the younger sister was an accomplished musician having studied music at University in Cardiff. The lights of London hailed for her too and eventually after many years the two sisters shared a flat together in North London.

Herta and Rudi were very happy being "Derby and Joan" as they wanted to be acknowledged by. They enjoyed classical music and often went to concerts and Opera in Cardiff as well as London. They shared the love of walking and travelling and spent many years travelling Europe by car and going much further afield on cruise ships all over the world.

One notable journey which they made when Herta was in very poor health was on 16 March 1999 when she and Rudi attended a ceremony at the Synagogue In Zutphen to honour the Coelingh couple who were added to the register of Righteous Gentiles at the Yad Vashem Memorial Garden in Israel.

***Three
Montroses***



I make no bones about not having a happy family life. We were brought up as children “to be seen and not heard”!! I was a spirited child and as the eldest in the family (although being a twin, my brother always said that he was born with manners and said “ladies first”!) I always had it tougher than my siblings and was always told “No”. I got on well with my siblings on the whole. My mother was a stay at home mother who was not allowed to work. My father was the main breadwinner and what he said was final. I did not enjoy school at all and was moved from one school to the next. My siblings were the “achievers”, I was the disappointment.

We were forced to take piano lessons, ballet lessons and always were made to feel different. When we went to Guides and Scouts, as part of the uniform we had to wear white socks but my mother always put us in coloured socks because they didn’t get dirty so quickly. As children we all had to wear spectacles and my father would make us wear the NHS glasses which were so unsightly. Going to school wearing glasses was a punishment as we were all ridiculed. I always questioned that as an Optician I thought my father would want to recommend his profession by showing off how smart his children looked. My parents did not have a lot of money when we were young children but all credit to my father who was an astute businessman, my parents ended up being very comfortably off. We were taught the value of money from an early age and were given our pocket money on Friday evenings and encouraged to save. Whatever we wanted to save and add to our Building Society account, my father would double. I don’t recall much fun at home because we had such a strict upbringing. There wasn’t much communication between adults and children. I recall when my grandmother in London had died, we were told to go in the garden and play and weren’t ever actually told that she had died.

From a very early age we were sent to Holland in the summer months to stay with our grandparents for 6 weeks at a stretch. This was some undertaking as both Grandparents worked full time in their shirt factory and consequently we were brought up by the maid. My first visit with my twin brother was when we were around 21 months old and my father would always proudly explain that he just handed us over to two British Airways Air hostesses who supervised our air travel and we were picked up at Schiphol airport by our grandparents. Roughly 2 months later we did the same journey in reverse and by all accounts, when we saw our parents again, we looked upon them as strangers!!! There also was a baby sister waiting for us. These visits continued for many years until we were 11 and 9 years of age. My parents felt they needed the break from us because “we were hard work!!!”

I came into my own when I was able to leave home and work in London as a hotel receptionist. I had finished a 2 year course in Cardiff in Hotel Management and Catering, something that I really enjoyed. I was living in the hotel as a receptionist and found I enjoyed being part of a team and meeting people. I continued working in the Catering Trade until my early 20’s and a situation arose for me to take a role as a Secretary in the EEC department of a large company in Victoria. At last the Dutch that I had learnt from spending so much time in Holland would come in useful.

In my late 20’s I met and married my husband Alan and we had 2 sons. Life was hard for us but we both worked hard and had a good family life. I had married into a family with lots of uncles and aunts and found this wonderful to feel so included in the Shackman way of life. I was especially fond of my Mother in Law and we shared very many interests. She was an accomplished needlewoman and knitter and I enjoyed sharing these interests with her.

We became involved with our Synagogue, Finchley Reform Synagogue with the boys attending Hebrew classes and Barmitzvah studies. I would help run the Children's Services and played an active part in volunteering for our Community Services Group, helping members in all walks of life. Throughout my married life I have always been a volunteer feeling it necessary to help those needier than myself.

While living independently in London with my sister, out of the blue we both received a package from our mother with Audio Tapes in. A representative from the Ann Frank Trust visited my mother in Cardiff and asked to interview her about her life during the Holocaust. When living at home we were never allowed to question our parents' histories. My father left Berlin as a child before the War to live with an Uncle in Manchester. His mother was English but had chosen to live and work in Berlin where she met her Rumanian husband. My father doted on his father and whenever we would ask questions about his family and life in Germany, it was made clear that the subject was taboo. He had a very close relationship with his father who died very young from Cancer and if ever the subject would be brought up, my father would become very upset.

Going back to my mother's interview and tape recording, my sister and I were shellshocked to listen to the history which was being explained in great detail (to a stranger) and this news had left such a lasting impression on me, that this is why I have spent so much time over the last 12 years looking into the past and learning as much as possible about the Holocaust. Again, my mother would not talk about this interview and to this day there remain many unanswered questions and the shame is that there is no one I can turn to for any answers.

Twelve years ago my twin brother died in very painful circumstances. My sister and I needed a change of scenery as Michael's death had "knocked the stuffing" out of us. We decided to spend a week in Israel. One day we went our separate ways and I chose to go to Yad Vashem to try and find out what I could about my Mother's adoptive parents, the Coelinghs. With the help of two Administrators, we ploughed through Encyclopedias covering all Jews who had perished in The Netherlands and eventually after hours, we found an insert which my mother had written about the time she had spent with the Coelinghs in Enschede. I felt overwhelming surprise and shock on finding these details and even more so when we found a number of Pages of Testimony in my mother's handwriting giving details of a number of Aunts and Uncles who had perished in the Holocaust. Unbelievable!!

My story ends where it started with the Coelinghs. My administrator "friends" then suggested that I should visit the Garden of Remembrance at Yad Vashem and look for the plaque on the wall which remembers Mr and Mrs Coelingh. It was like "looking for a needle in a haystack" but I found the plaque and stood in front of it in tears and spoke to this wall and explained that if it hadn't been for this wonderful, unselfish, caring couple, I would not be here!!!

This is where I feel that my mother's story comes to an end.

I continue to research the Holocaust.

Monica Shackman May 2020.



My Story

by

Garry F



In 1936 Garry Fabian's family fled Germany to Czechoslovakia, hoping to escape Nazi persecution, but in vain. By 1942 Garry, aged eight, was interned in Theresienstadt. He was to spend till May 1945 in that 'model' concentration camp and was one of only about 150 children of the 15,000 who entered its gates, to survive. This chapter bears witness to the real story of what happened in that infamous camp. Remarkably, his parents also survived the camps and were able to build a new life in Australia. This is a story of amazing courage and resilience



Garry Fabian

MY STORY

The story of my family and indeed myself is not more special than others, but reflects the many stories of European Jewish families, and what happened to them in the 1930s and 1940s. It also offers a brief glimpse of the movement of those who survived the Holocaust and the rebuilding of their lives, both across geographical and cultural renewal.

It was a cold wintry morning in July 1952, typical of Melbourne winter mornings. I stood up in the Melbourne Magistrates' Court, not because I had broken the law, but to become naturalised as an Australian citizen. In the 1950s these ceremonies were conducted in the cold

sterile atmosphere of the Magistrates' Court. Later they were held in the more congenial surroundings of the local town halls, with some pomp and circumstance.

The Magistrate in charge of the proceedings called on me to renounce my allegiance to my homeland, before taking the oath of allegiance to the Crown....

At this point I must go back in time to trace the events of almost two decades proceeding this morning.

SETTING THE SCENE

My family on my father's side goes back over 400 years in Germany, and most likely considerably longer. The family came from the Pomeranian town of Kallies (Kalisz). The first official record can be found in the town chronicle in Kallies (now part of Poland). In 1602 it was recorded that in consideration for services rendered to the local Land Graf (local gentry) "Jew Fabian was allowed to purchase a plot of land." This was a most unusual event, as Jews generally were not allowed to own land during that period. While the records available to me are very sketchy to say the least, I understand that the family lived there until the time of my great grandfather. My grandfather, Albert, moved from Kallies to Berlin as a young man, and lived there until his death in 1935. He married my grandmother, Johanna Baron, and they had four children, Ernst, Manfred, Hanna and Leo. Manfred, my father, was born on 10 September 1899.

On my mother's side, the family has been traced back to the late 1200's in the area surrounding Heidelberg and Manheim, but this is from verbal snippets my late mother told me and I do not have any more details. My maternal grandparents, Salo and Augusta Frisch, had two children, my mother, Paula and her younger brother, Alfred. My mother was born in Heidelberg on 30 August, 1908.

My parents were married on 26 June 1932 in Berlin. After the wedding, my parents moved to Stuttgart where my father was employed as a tobacco salesman. I was born in Stuttgart on 11 January 1934 and named Gerhard, as my mother admired the famous poet Gerhard Hauptmann.

EARLY DAYS



My parents wedding day
26th June 1932

Our first stop is an event that took place almost a year before I was born. This event was to alter the course of my life, as well as that of tens of millions of people around the world. The date was 30 January 1933, when Adolf Hitler became the power that was to rule Germany for the next twelve and a half years. Life became difficult and restrictive for those who did not fit the image of the new order. If you happened to be Jewish, life became even more difficult, with severe restrictions and officially encouraged daily harassment.

After the proclamation of the Nuremberg Laws in 1935, life became increasingly restrictive for Jews. In 1936 my family decided that there was no future for them in Germany, a

country that had been their home for over seven hundred years. Together with my maternal grandparents, they purchased a surgical instrument factory in neighbouring Czechoslovakia and emigrated there. While the move made sense at the time, with hindsight it is obvious that they did not move far enough to escape what was to happen a few short years later.

My first real recollection of events can be compared to sitting in the sun with your eyes closed, half asleep, feeling the warmth on your face and seeing the bright light through your eyelids as a warm orange glow. Suddenly a cloud passes over the sun, and it turns dark, with a cold wind blowing over your face. This cloud came over the horizon and was to stay for some six and a half years. The date was 14 September 1938.

STARTING THE JOURNEY

The whole family was just getting ready to sit down to lunch, the food steaming on the table, when my father rushed in. In a state of great agitation, he asked, "Have you heard the news? The Germans are occupying the Sudetenland within the next four hours." While I cannot recall the exact conversation following this dramatic announcement, I can still clearly remember my great dismay. The food was forgotten and my parents and grandparents rushed around the house, frantically packing a few belongings and loading up our car with great haste. When you are four and a half years old, lunch has far greater importance to you than any other events, no matter how cosmic they may be.

As soon as we heard the news of the German annexation, it was evident that we had to leave. My mother and I were rushed to the local railway station and put on the first available train ready to leave. My father assuring us that he would follow shortly by car, as soon as he had finalised a couple of urgent tasks

The last piece of the mosaic finally fell into place many years later. I was leafing through a small prayer book given to me by a friend of the family when I was born, as was the custom at the time. It had a suitable inscription on the flyleaf, but I discovered a second inscription, obviously written in some haste in my father's handwriting. My father's inscription read: "Dedicated to you and your mother, from your loving father as long as he lives, 14/9/1938."

Literally hundreds of people in this position were taken daily to the nearest border and sent into the strip of territory between countries, known as 'no man's land'. Both countries on

either side refused them entry into their territory. A whole army of 'non persons' in the late 1930's spent months on end being expelled, illegally re-entering a country, then being arrested and expelled again. They became the unwanted and innocent pawns in a deadly game of politics in which they were totally powerless.

After about a week or so after arriving, we left Trenchin again and travelled back towards the centre of Czechoslovakia. A week later, sitting on grimy trains, being shunted for hours on end to sidings off the main track to allow troop transports to pass, we arrived in Brno, the capital of Moravia. There we finally met up with my father and my maternal grandparents.

We found a room at the house of a Mrs Pfeffer, with the five of us living in a room that under normal circumstances was barely adequate for one person. This was our temporary 'castle', living in hiding. If the police had discovered we were living there, we would most likely have been arrested on the spot as illegals, taken to the nearest border and shoved into no man's land with little or no ceremony.

If there was a knock at the door, we would only open it to a pre-arranged signal, living in constant fear of discovery and arrest. After a few weeks, our landlady, fearful of the consequences of being detected with illegals under her roof, asked us to leave. It was practically impossible to find alternative accommodation under the prevailing circumstances. We decide to head towards Prague, the capital, with the hope that we could lose ourselves from the eyes of the authorities in a larger city. As the general situation throughout Europe worsened and conditions in Germany daily became more severe, a vast number of refugees were moving around Europe. All countries became extremely strict in trying to control the influx of refugees into their territory. Spot checks were set up on highways, at railway and bus stations and any other points of entry. Anyone found without valid documents was arrested and expelled without ceremony or delay.

Once again we were helped by a stroke of luck. We met up with a former employee, a Czech named Pavel, who was also anxious to avoid drawing the attention of the authorities to himself. He had been an active member of the Communist party for many years, and the political climate of the day was not exactly welcoming to people of his convictions. Things were getting a little uncomfortable for him, and he decided that Prague would provide a better place in which to lose himself at that time.

A NEW ENVIRONMENT

We had to keep moving from lodging to lodging quite frequently in order to avoid detection by the authorities.

Naturally under the circumstances it was out of the question for my father to seek normal employment. In Europe, and especially during that time, documents were needed for every regular activity. This included legitimately renting a room, dealing with officialdom and most certainly getting employment. We did not possess valid documents to allow, let alone facilitate any official contacts.

In order to supplement our less than modest income, my mother engaged in various activities where she could work at home. Such strange items appeared on our kitchen table such as soft toys to be stuffed, caps and berets to be sewn and belts to be knitted. Contacts for these various enterprises came through people as my father drove around or visited during his working day. She also made chocolates, which my father sold to his passengers and contacts. I recall with great delight I was allowed to lick the bowl clean whenever a chocolate making session took place. As we did not officially exist, my parents could not obtain work permits, so all these activities were of course quite illegal.

Naturally the authorities became aware of our presence after a few weeks. A peculiar sort of lottery developed. We would be issued with an expulsion order, as were thousands of others, enforceable within thirty days. These orders would be ignored, and from time to time the police would round up a number of people, transport them to the nearest border and expel them into no-man's land. The country on the other side of the border would not allow them to enter their area. Under the cover of darkness they would re-cross the border, in most cases the border guards turning a blind eye to proceedings.

Somehow we managed to survive in Prague for some five months under those conditions, living a very precarious existence, taking one day at a time. In the background of our immediate concerns were the darkening clouds of war gathering over Europe, becoming more threatening and ominous every day. Rumours of the wildest kind became part of the daily fabric of life. We applied to emigrate to a number of countries, but as 1939 dawned, the world shut its doors to hundreds of thousands of desperate men, women and children,

effectively sealing their fate and for millions, signing their eventual death warrants.

As precarious and unnerving as our existence was in Prague, pre-war Czechoslovakia was a free and democratic state with a reasonably stable society. Suddenly this changed, however, and overnight a new and menacing dimension entered our lives. On 15 March 1939 the Germans marched into Prague, and the steel jaws of Nazi Germany that we had eluded twice before - once in 1936 and again in September 1938 - closed firmly on our lives. They were to hold us for the next six years.

A COLD DAWNING

I remember my father coming home at lunch-time, announcing that the German army was marching into Prague. It would appear that in our family, significant events in history always seem to coincide with meals. Any event is obviously seen differently by a six year old than by an adult. While I naturally did not quite understand the full significance of the events at the time, I clearly recall seeing the columns of soldiers, trucks and armoured vehicles in the street. The very arrogance emanating from the German military machine sent cold shivers down my spine, and I sensed the embodiment of evil in front of me. Even today I can still feel the aura when recalling that particular day, and no doubt it will remain with me for the rest of my life. It was an omen, an outrider of the evil things that were to unfold in the near future.

The Jewish Communal Organisation in Prague and elsewhere tried to look after the growing army of refugees as best as it could with its limited facilities and resources. However, to rely on charity and handouts, no matter how genuinely given, is at best a demeaning experience. It only served to lower one's self esteem at a time when external authoritarian forces were trying their best to degrade human beings under their rule.

Once again a twist of fate came to the rescue. During the period my family had the surgical instrument factory, my father built up considerable expertise and valuable contacts in this field. In March 1939 the Jewish Communal Organisation was looking for experienced personnel to run its various activities and services to cope with the increasing demands placed on these resources. A position to run the medical and back-up services became available, and my father was employed in the medical equipment section. While the salary was modest, it provided a basic regular income on which we could survive.

We moved to a small flat and our lives assumed a semblance of normality, as far as this was possible under a hostile occupying power whose basic platform expressed a paranoid hatred of Jews and anybody associated with Jewish values. At that stage I had reached the age when one starts school. I was enrolled at the local school with some misgivings by my parents, as my knowledge of Czech was very limited, or more accurately, still almost non-existent. However six weeks before the commencement of the school year this problem was solved. The official edict was issued that Jewish children were forbidden to attend school. In theory this was a situation every kid dreams about, but the reality was different.

***Garry the avid
reader***



The next school year, 1941/42, the Germans, whose whims were illogical to say the least, allowed a Jewish school to open. This was at the Jewish Communal Centre, and somewhere between fifteen and twenty children attended. It was a new experience to be with a peer group. Our teacher, whose name I cannot recall, was a balding redheaded fellow with an unpredictable and volatile temper. Our academic learning left a lot to be desired. What he did instill in us, however, was a deep consciousness of Jewish history, and a sense of pride in our ancestry. This no doubt had a great affect in giving us the self esteem which helped us to survive morally over the next few years, even if only a small handful managed to survive physically.

During that period we were required a yellow star with the word 'Jude' ('Jew' in German) at

all times. This was taken to ridiculous lengths. For instance, when we kids were running around in shorts during the middle of summer and not wearing anything else, we had to pin it on our shorts.

Life became progressively more restrictive. In July 1941, Heydrich, the Reich's Protector for Bohemia and Moravia, was assassinated by a group of members of the Czech army-in-exile who parachuted in from England. After these things became even more oppressive for the whole population took place. For each German killed, ten innocent hostages were arrested and executed.

Following this incident, the Germans decided to set up a ghetto and deport all Jews in order to 'cleanse the country' of these 'undesirables'. Theresienstadt, an old military fortress dating back to the eighteenth century, was chosen. Located some fifty kilometres from Prague, it had been a military garrison town and was ideally suited for their purpose. Transports carrying Jews from Prague and elsewhere in Europe started arriving in Theresienstadt in 1941 and continued until the end of the war.

In the meantime life in Prague continued. At the end of the school year in July 1942, the Germans decided that the Jewish school was to be closed. I did not go back to school in a formal sense until after the end of the war in 1945. For the next few months I clearly remember one incident. A friend and I were walking down the street one day when we were accosted by about half a dozen louts, aged about fifteen or sixteen, who belonged to Hitler Youth. After the usual taunts and insults, they started hitting us. My friend, who was taught never to fight back, just stood there and took it all. I started hitting back and kicking their shins and put up a great fight. The end result was that my friend came home with a broken nose, two black eyes and lots of blood all over him. I came out of the fight with a couple of scratches and a bit of a fright. It was an invaluable lesson, and from that day on I learned to stand up for myself, no matter what the odds were.

ON THE MOVE AGAIN

Deportations from Prague were a weekly occurrence and in November 1942, our turn came. We were to report to a sports stadium, which was the collection point, and the official machine took over our lives. We were registered and given a number, which was to be our identity for the next three years. I became simply number CC988 in the records of the Third Reich.

Once all the formalities, carried out with the traditional German thoroughness, were completed, we marched to the nearby railway station and boarded a train. After a journey of some two hours, we arrived at a railway siding about five kilometres from Theresienstadt. The rail line into the ghetto would not be built for another year. We all disembarked and over one thousand men, women and children of all ages picked up their belongings, one piece of luggage per person, and started to walk the five kilometres. This trek seemed to go on for hours and a contingent of German SS and the local gendarmerie ensured that a steady pace was kept up and no one slacked. After about three hours we arrived in Theresienstadt itself. It is a typical eighteenth century garrison town, surrounded on four sides by stone and earthwork parapets. Inside the four sides of the town, or more accurately a large village, are military barracks, each with a large inner courtyard. It becomes quite evident that it was built in the days when horses played a great part in the affairs of the military and the courtyards were used as parade grounds.

The centre of the village consisted of a large, open village green, surrounded by the public buildings like the town hall, the church and other important buildings. Houses and large storehouses occupied the grid of streets around the square. We were accommodated in the barracks, men, women and children in different barracks, specially allocated to these groups. I was put in the children's barrack. Each 'room', which in reality was designed for the military of the 1750s, housed about fifty to sixty persons on three tiered wooden bunks. We were given hessian bags filled with straw for mattresses, and one blanket of doubtful origin. These mattresses or palliases as they are called are passably comfortable for a few days after which they become lumpy. They then need constant shaking up for them to maintain even the most minimal semblance of a mattress.

Not only were the rooms overcrowded but even worse was the fact that the overcrowding created another more serious problem. The environment acted like a magnet in attracting fleas, lice and other vermin, adding to the discomfort and becoming a health risk as these 'guests' spread diseases.

The food did not conform to the highest culinary standards, to put it politely! In fact it was practically inedible in quality, microscopic in quantity and most likely quite useless in nutritional value. The soup in reality was dirty water with something floating in it; the bread became as hard as a rock after the first day; small pieces of meat, horse meat, which one could almost assume came from the original horses that ran around the place when it was built was barely edible; and similar offerings that had their origins in sources one did not

bother to investigate were our diet.

It has been said that 'hunger is the best cook'. This is true indeed, particularly when you are starving. Anything, no matter how bad or little tastes like ambrosia and you cannot wait for the next 'meal', if this description can be realistically applied. The surroundings and the nourishment, or perhaps the lack of it, soon took their toll. I came down with measles, chicken pox and whooping cough, all in quick succession. Many children had these and quite a number of them died as a result. It would appear that I had greater resilience than most, because despite the conditions and lack of available medicines, I recovered in a reasonably short time, and life settled into a routine. Perhaps the adage that 'only the good die young' is a reflection of my character!

Transports continued to arrive from Czechoslovakia, Germany, Austria and other parts of Europe. By the middle of 1943, some forty thousand people were crammed into a village that in normal times accommodated some three or four thousand inhabitants. Dirt, disease and hunger were prevalent in all corners of the ghetto. The old and frail died in great numbers. Hand drawn carts, which were used as local hearses, were a daily sight, as common as the milk or bread carts in a normal community.

Despite the hardships and misery, an amazing range of activities took place. Some of the finest artists and brains in Europe were assembled in the ghetto. Concerts, plays, theatre and other cultural events flourished. Music and even operas were composed, including a children's opera, *Brundibor*, its performance sanctioned by the ghetto administration. Chamber orchestras were formed and performed concerts. Clandestine religious services were held on Jewish holidays and a whole range of activities uplifted the spirit of the inhabitants, or more accurately, inmates. This cultural life played a considerable role in keeping up the spirit of hope that one day all this would come to an end, and the world would return from this journey into lunacy.

There were some quite bizarre sidelights highlighting the Nazi's zeal to make the world *Judenrein* (free of Jews). I can clearly remember two particular incidents. One was when a Catholic priest arrived, still wearing his cassock, complete with yellow *Judenstern*, and a second, when a German major from the Afrika Corps, still in uniform, but with all the trimmings removed, also arrived in the ghetto. It appeared that both, somewhere, had

Jewish grandmothers of which they were blissfully unaware, turning up in their pedigree. As a result they were 'outed' as Jewish and sent to the ghetto, obviously deeply shocked by this unexpected turn of events. If they survived, however, they may have later come to bless their fate as after the war, many Germans looked into their family trees, trying to find a Jewish grandmother as 'proof' that they too were victims, not perpetrators. It would seem that necessity - or more accurately feelings of guilt - is the mother of invention, or in this case, creative genealogy!

With all the transports pouring into the ghetto, it soon became filled to capacity and regular transports left Theresienstadt to go east. At that time we were told people were being relocated to labour camps. Only during the last few weeks of the war did the majority of us learn what had happened to those who went east.

A LONG DAY

The Germans had a passion for statistics and record keeping became their obsession. On 17 November 1943 they decided to take a census. The day remains vividly in my mind.

That day underlined the power structure on which the ghetto operated. The SS men were the administrators and guards and Czech gendarmes, a sort of country police who carried out guard duties. The gendarmes were by and large very decent, and tried to help wherever possible. The SS were a mixture, most of them quite officious sadists.

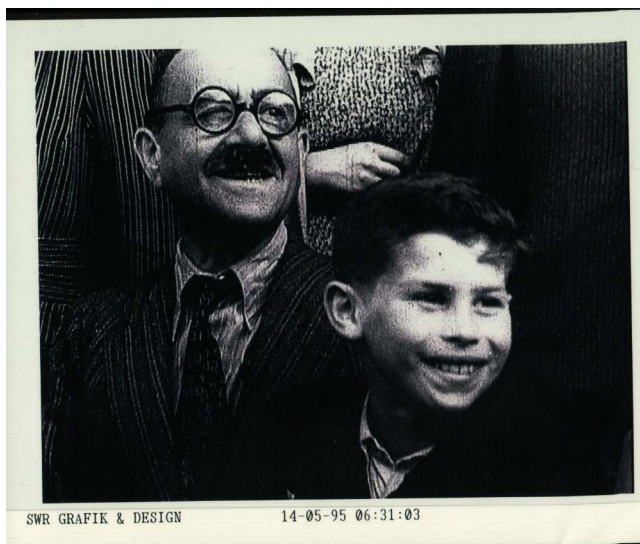
The *Judenrat*, the Jewish administration, were the nominal authority who ran the day-to-day affairs of the ghetto, but were totally beholden to the whims and instructions of the Germans. To some, they were collaborators, but to others they were seen as trying to minimise the harshness of the German regime. At the end of the day, they were in a no-win situation, and every so often, the whole of the administration was shipped off to Auschwitz.

GRIM MAKE BELIEVE

Early in 1944, something indeed very strange happened at Theresienstadt. An official beautification program was started. Buildings were cleaned up on the outside, shops appeared, and fancy street signs went up. The large huts in the town square used for war-related production of one sort or another were demolished and a garden planted. The wildest rumours circulated throughout the ghetto. It turned out in the end that a Red Cross

delegation was to visit and inspect the ghetto, to make a report to the International Red Cross. The whole project took on the look of a film set. Orchestras practiced in a specially constructed bandstand and outdoor cafes were set up. And the place began to look like a popular spa. It was all a hollow sham. Lewis Carroll in writing *Alice in Wonderland* only had ten per cent of the imagination the Germans displayed in setting up this sham facade, specially designed to fool the Red Cross delegation.

Apparently the beautification effort worked beyond their wildest dreams. The delegation, carefully chaperoned by the Germans, spent five hours in the ghetto. They saw what they were supposed to see and left to write a glowing report on the conditions in which Jews lived under the protection of 'the kindly masters of the Third Reich'. There was another sidelight, which we only discovered some years after the war. The Germans also made a propaganda film, *The Fuhrer Gives a Town to the Jews*, which I will discuss in more detail later on.



***Spectator at soccer game
in German Propaganda
film***

At this time I was employed in the tailoring shop. Everybody had to work, no matter how young or old. I was ten years old and very soon I became a 'specialist' in sewing shoulder pads. Most of our 'production' was mending German uniforms that came back from the eastern front. Many of these had bullet holes in them, which provided us with a certain satisfaction, knowing that there was one less of them! While this may not have been a totally rational reaction under normal circumstances, considering our position it was a feeling that did provide some comfort to us at the time.

In mid 1944, the tide of the war was definitely turning. Wild rumours kept circulating about

allied landings, as well as news that the war was about to end, but these rumours were just that. They were based on optimism rather than fact. With time, however, we began to see some concrete signs. From the middle of 1944, the United States airforce started daylight raids over Germany. Theresienstadt was in the direct flight path to Germany. Practically every day hundreds of planes flew overhead, and these great black planes brought a glimmer of hope to all of us. Transports to the east continued unabated, week after week, month after month. It was a lottery as to who would be on the next one, and individuals and groups were seemingly picked at random.

Once again, luck or fortune was on our side. My father was in charge of the medical supply store and we were classified as 'essentials'. This gave us a measure of protection, but it was but a tenuous one, as every so often the 'essentials' were the very ones selected to be shipped east. We were sure it was only a question of time before our number came up.

LIGHT AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL

As 1944 came to a close and 1945 dawned, rumours kept persisting about Allied advances into Europe. Nothing certain was ever learned, but hope springs eternal. Suddenly in March 1945, transports from the east started arriving in the ghetto from concentration camps. These contained human wrecks, which the Germans started clearing out of Poland and East Germany as the Russian army advanced. This was part of their frantic bid to remove the evidence of their atrocities. Many of these people had been in Theresienstadt. At this point we all learned the whole horrible truth of what had happened. The majority had been in Auschwitz, and this was our first real confirmation of the mass extermination. True, there had been rumours over the years that filtered back somehow, but very few people were told of these rumours. Of those who heard them, most refused to believe them as it was outside normal human comprehension to accept what was happening.

It became obvious that the Germans planned something diabolical in Theresienstadt as their final act. Strange constructions were being built on the outskirts, and the bush telegraph spoke of gas chambers, large moats that were to be filled with people and flooded, and similar plans in the making. Great unrest swept through the ghetto. A new menace also threatened. The human wrecks coming back from the east brought typhoid with them, and an epidemic broke out which ultimately claimed three thousand victims.

The Germans were engaged in frantically burning records, and shipping stores out in daily convoys of army trucks. Something was in the air. An atmosphere of anticipation, fuelled by hope, pervaded the ghetto. Despite the threat of diabolical German plans consistent with the pattern of their behaviour over the past twelve years, it seemed that perhaps that some light was appearing at the end of the tunnel. There was hope that the nightmare would soon end.

Spring had come again. It was May 1945, and we had been in Theresienstadt for almost three years now. To an eleven-year-old this is almost a third of a lifetime. I could only vaguely recall life before I came there. One night, on 4 May, a great deal of shooting took place around the ghetto. Everyone was terrified. Was this going to be the Germans' final act of destruction? So near to the end and all seemed to be lost. It felt as if it went on for hours, but towards dawn it suddenly stopped and all was silent.

Suddenly a low noise was heard. It sounded like some large motorised vehicles in the distance. "My god, the Germans is coming back," somebody cried out. Great consternation broke out. Before anyone could take action, three tanks came around the corner. They were Russian tanks. It is doubtful if the Red Army ever got a more enthusiastic welcome anywhere in the world than those three tanks on that day.

It was over! The nightmare had finally ended and freedom dawned for the fifteen thousand inmates still left in the ghetto. But the after effects were still to take their toll, and for some three thousand typhoid victims it was too late. They died in the weeks after the liberation.

The reality of what happened started to sink in. Many were the only survivors of their whole family and did not really know where to go. It was difficult, often impossible to return to normality after what had happened over the previous six years

RETURN TO NORMAL

We stayed on in Theresienstadt until late July, and then returned to Bodenbach, called Podmokly in Czech, the town we had hastily left in 1938.

Letters via the Red Cross went out to our relatives in Australia and Brazil. Two of my father's brothers, Ernst and Leo, had migrated to Australia before the war and a cousin

had migrated to Brazil. Finally the world had decided to admit that small remnant of victims of persecution to which we belonged. Our visa for Australia arrived some weeks later. We were among the first to be included in the Australian post war change of heart on immigration. A visa from Brazil arrived a week later. Had the order been reversed, this story would have probably been written in Portuguese. Chance indeed plays a great part in human destiny.

Even I had to return to a normal life. For the first time in my life, and I was eleven and a half years old by now, I went to a regular school. Fortunately over the years my Czech had become fluent, and I was able to fit in quite well. Considering my lack of formal school experience, I kept up with the rest of the class and my results were remarkably good.

At this point, it was also suggested that I undergo a name change. My uncle in Australia wrote to suggest that no-one in Australia would be able to pronounce 'Gerhard' and I should call myself 'Garry', so Garry I became.

As the months went by, the Russian influence became more marked and the political climate became a little tense. I sensed a certain anxiety around the house. Our efforts to obtain passage to Australia increased and many letters were written here and there. There were also other complications. My father had never learned to speak Czech, and after the war, to speak German in Czechoslovakia was quite dangerous, and one did so at one's peril. He travelled extensively for his business and we were always a little concerned. He overcame this problem by an ingenious device. Somewhere he obtained a little Swiss lapel badge, and wandered around the countryside for a long time pretending to be Swiss. He successfully carried on with this charade until we left to come to Australia.

There was an interesting sidelight. As a result of Germany defeating Canada in the World Cup ice hockey championship, Czechoslovakia went to the top of the points table and became world champion. Suddenly everybody spoke German openly again. Sport, particularly when national pride is at stake, overcomes prejudice and politics.

AN IMPORTANT MILESTONE

While our preparations for leaving for Australia were going on, another very important event took place. As my thirteenth birthday approached, the time had come for me to have my bar mitzvah. Thirteen-year-old Jewish boys in the areas that had been occupied by

Germany were a rare phenomenon, and indeed an almost extinct species by the mid 1940s.

Our rabbi before the war had by some miracle survived a number of concentration camps and returned to Bodenbach after the war. The small Jewish community there was a totally different one after the war. Before the war, the community consisted of around four to five hundred member. Only a handful of the pre-war congregation survived and most had spent the war years in England, returning at the end of the war. At the time of my bar mitzvah between a hundred and fifty and two hundred lived in the district.

For some months I was instructed and diligently learned my Torah portion. The great day dawned and I went through the ceremony with flying colours. This great event was followed by a family dinner at home. Some twenty people, who were the remnants of our friends, came from all corners of the country to take part in this great occasion. The odds of my having arrived at that stage of life were quite astronomical. During the four years from 1941, some fifteen thousand children under the age of fourteen had passed through Theresienstadt. By May 1945, only some one hundred and fifty had survived.



A STRANGE NEW WORLD

Our journey to Australia was a complicated one. We sailed from France to New York, then flew to San Francisco and boarded a ship across the Pacific to Australia via New Zealand which took three weeks. Two days after leaving New Zealand we arrived in Sydney and

stepped ashore in Australia. Once again the Jewish community was on hand to look after us. Most of the other immigrants were destined for Sydney, but we were to travel on to Melbourne. The ship arrived in the morning, and after having spent the day in Sydney, we took the night train to Melbourne. At least the trains were punctual and at 9.00 am sharp, the train pulled into Spencer Street Station.

A few days later I was sent to school. It was St Kilda Park Primary School, and for all that I understood of what was going on, I might as well have gone to Hottentot school! Surprisingly after three weeks I started to pick up English quite rapidly and could make myself understood. We were ahead of the wave of immigration of the late 40s and early 50s, and anything foreign was looked on with suspicion, or grudging tolerance at best. To eat rye bread was to be labelled as a 'reffe', the only spaghetti one ate was cold out of a tin on bread, and coffee came out of a jar with the brand name 'Turban'. In those days you adapted, or were looked at as an outcast. My early training at adapting came in very handy, but personally I didn't experience any marked prejudice.

One memorable experience was attending my first Australian Rules Football game. A school friend, who was a keen Geelong supporter, asked me to come to the football with him. It was all quite strange to me. We got on the train and went to Victoria Park in Collingwood. I was quite puzzled as I could not see a park, only a football stadium. It was packed. We stood squeezed between a horde of people and I was told that we were in the 'outer'. I did not understand that either, because we had come in through a gate, where the man took our shilling, so how could we be outside? Still, it would all be explained in due course no doubt.

At that time, my father worked at Ogden Industries in East Oakleigh (now Huntingdale). They manufactured Lockwood locks, but had also established a section manufacturing medical syringes during the war. With his background in the industry, my father was employed as an 'expert' in this area. He travelled from Thornbury to East Oakleigh every day, initially by public transport. This was very inconvenient as well as time consuming and at the end of 1948 we moved to East Malvern, which was a lot closer to his work. It also meant I had to change schools once again. Caulfield Technical School was just near us, making it the logical choice. I took my report book and went to see the headmaster, a Mr Buchanan. He looked at my report book and told me I could start in Form Two (Year Eight) when the new school year commenced in February 1949. I would be fifteen by then and my ability to stand up for myself came to the fore once again.

I explained to Mr Buchanan that I had missed a lot of school and that for my age, I should be in Form Three (Year Nine). I doubt that he had struck anything like me before. He was a stern disciplinarian from the 'old school' and was quite taken aback at such a request. After some discussion, he finally, very grudgingly agreed to put me in Form Three for six weeks. If I did not fit in or keep up, back to Form Two I would go. By rights, in his opinion, this was where I should have been. "And don't think that I will not be watching you very closely indeed," were his parting words.

My ambition had always been to become a veterinarian. However this required university study, and four and a half years of formal schooling between Grade One and Form Three were hardly a good grounding for such ambitions. My second love was to do something practical, as, even as a child, I was always tinkering with tools and playing with batteries and wires. So, becoming an electrician was the obvious choice and my best option was to try for an apprenticeship.

To become an Australian citizen at that time, a minimum residential period of five years was required. As soon as this time came, I applied, and after waiting for some months, the application was approved. This had brought me to the Magistrates' Court that particular June morning. After finishing the formal part of the proceedings, the magistrate then gave a short address stressing that we were now full Australian citizens with rights and obligations attached to that status. He added as an afterthought that most of us had travelled a long way to come here. We were handed our certificates on crisp parchment with an impressive looking red seal attached and it was over. The name on the certificate was 'Gerhard known as Garry' which completed my transition from the old to the new.

I stepped out into the street. Life flowed along with a normalcy one expects of a weekday in Melbourne. As the pale wintry sunlight brought me back to reality, I agreed with the magistrate. I had indeed come a long way, not only in a geographical and physical sense. A great deal of life and a huge range of experiences had certainly been compressed into the first eighteen years of my life.

During that period there was compulsory national service for all eighteen year olds. However, if you were an apprentice you could defer until after completion of the apprenticeship. I registered in January 1952, but deferred my military service until the completion of my apprenticeship. I will come back to that a little later.

My father has started a small medical supply business in 1949. Around this time he also had a heart attack from which he recovered quite well, but as time went on, his health started to decline. By the time I had finished my apprenticeship at the end of 1955, he had occasionally talked about wanting me to come into the business, but I had been keen to follow my trade. However, when my father had another mild attack in mid 1955 and his health continued to deteriorate, the obvious solution was for me to put my trade on hold for a few months and join him in the business.

The business dealt with doctors and hospitals, as well as supplying first aid supplies to factories and industry. After a short time I took to calling on these diverse clients like a duck to water, and started having a string of successes in my new career. However, while I enjoyed the work, it was never my intention to see it as a permanent career path.

Around this time another important event occurred that was to have a very major impact on the rest of my life. While we attended synagogue during the high holidays every year and my parents had their circle of mainly Jewish friends, I had very few other contacts in Jewish circles. In late 1954 I was invited to a function of B'nai B'rith Youth (BBY), a Jewish youth movement, and joined shortly after. I became involved very quickly and this opened new horizons, both culturally and socially.

This function was the start of an association with B'nai B'rith that has lasted for well over 60 years. It has become a very integral part, not only of my life, but indeed the life of my whole family. But the roots of this association go back even further, as my late grandfather was a B'nai B'rith member in pre-war Germany and my late father also joined B'nai B'rith here in Melbourne, making me a third generation 'Ben Brith'.

WEARING THE QUEEN'S UNIFORM

*Garry the sailor in the
RAN*



I had deferred my national service obligations for several years and completed my apprenticeship. After spending six months working in my father's business, the invitation to 'join the Queen's men' arrived towards the end of 1955.

At that time you could do your national service in the army, air force or navy.

My preference was for the navy rather than the army, as you served six months in one spell rather than over a 3 year period in the army spread over weekends, where most of my friends had gone.

Due to the fact that I had trade qualifications and the luck of the draw, I was picked to go in the navy. The call came in late 1955 and in January 1956 I started my six months stint 'wearing the Queen's uniform'. No wonder it did not fit properly as I have a different build to the Queen!

Initial training was at a land based Navy base which was followed by the second phase.

Some two months into our training the time had come to actually go to sea on a real ship. We were assigned to the *HMAS Sydney*, then an ageing aircraft carrier, for a seven-week assignment. There was some unhappiness amongst the national servicemen, as all previous intakes had been on ships that travelled overseas. However, in 1955, when ships visited Japan, over fifty per cent of the five hundred national servicemen contracted a 'social disease' by associating with the local 'ladies of the night'.

This episode caused a stormy debate in parliament with politicians gravely concerned with the 'physical and moral health of Australian youth'. It resulted in an edict being issued by the Minister for Defence to the navy, forbidding national servicemen to leave Australian waters. The upshot was that we sailed to Adelaide and the Barrier Reef, which we all considered a very poor second at the time.

Apart from one regular naval recruit, as far as I was aware, I was the only Jewish sailor at the time in the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). While I did not seek any special privileges, I did manage to get a week's leave during Pesach on 'compassionate grounds', which was a bonus.

The day we embarked on the *Sydney* the officer-in-charge, a commander of the electrical section, assembled the eleven of us who were assigned to it. He stressed we were under his command and could not be drafted into any other duties. A few minutes later, the petty

officer in charge of seamen marched up to us and wanted to assign a task to us. There is a saying in the navy, that 'if it is stationary paint it, if it is brass, polish it or if it moves salute it'. Our task involved painting the ship.

The actual location of the job was a barge on the waterline and the only access was by scaling down a rope on the side of the ship, some twenty-five metres down. This was not my cup of tea and I had no intention of getting involved in this activity. While my companions did not want to incur the wrath of the petty officer, I told him that we had been specifically told not to accept any duties outside our own section. He ranted and raved and threatened to have me punished for gross disobedience. I suggested he consult with the commander of our section, who outranked him by a considerable degree. Just at that moment the man himself came by and asked what the problem was. I explained the situation to him and he tore strips off the petty officer, stating that if he ever tried to interfere with his men again, there would be lots of trouble. So I, and indeed my companions, did not scale down the twenty-five metres to paint the ship. Obviously past lessons learned in self-preservation when I was very young were very useful attributes in other situations.

While I was in uniform, a rather funny incident occurred in Sydney. I had become very friendly with Naomi Porush, Rabbi Porush's daughter, through our association with B'nai B'rith Youth. One weekend the *HMAS Sydney* was in port in Sydney and I had shore leave. Naomi and I went out together on Saturday night and at that time; Rabbi Porush lived in Macleay Street, just down from Kings Cross. The next day the word was all over town that the rabbi's daughter was seen walking through the Cross with a sailor!

SETTLING DOWN

Just before I went into the navy I met Evelyn Schlesinger, also through BBY, and we started to go out together. Our first date was a B'nai B'rith Ball and I asked her to this by letter while I was somewhere up north on the ship.

At the end of June 1956, I returned to 'Civvy Street', having completed my obligation to Her Majesty the Queen and settled back into normal life. I still had ambitions of going overseas and, as a qualified tradesman, could have got a job - and a free trip - on one of the many overseas liners, which in those days were the regular mode of travel to the United Kingdom and Europe. However, somehow this ambition was never realised. I became more involved

in the family business, as well as going steady with Evelyn and becoming very involved with BBY.

The next two years passed quite quickly and in late 1958, Evelyn and I became engaged. Just a few days before our engagement party, my father suddenly passed away, which triggered a number of changes in our life.

My father's death had both short and long term effects on the future course of my life. Any plans I may have harboured regarding changing direction in my work naturally had to be put on hold. The first consideration was to keep the business running and maintain its customer base. The ongoing income for my mother, as well as my plans to get married, required a stable income. Continuing with an established, even if modest business provided the most logical choice.

CHANGING DIRECTION

Our wedding day 24th
December 1959



Our wedding took place on 24 December 1959 at Temple Beth Israel, with a reception following at the Chevron Hotel celebration.

Returning from our honeymoon, we discovered that the family would be expanded some nine months later, as Evelyn was pregnant, which provided a new and unexpected dimension. In September 1960, Carole, our older daughter arrived, setting a new pattern

of family life and responsibility.

In 1963 the family expanded, with our second daughter Vicki coming on the scene. For the next few years everything flowed reasonably smoothly, through the normal cycle of daily life. Carole, followed by Vicki a couple of years later, started school at Murrumbidgee State School, the local primary school.

Evelyn and I continued to become more involved in B'nai B'rith, serving in various official positions. I became involved with the school committee and other bodies, including several professional bodies, union activities, and later in Rotary, where I am still very active to this day. As the years flowed by things went along without any major dramas. While business progressed at a steady pace, it provided a reasonable living, but did not cater for extravagances. As the business climate changed, there were complex technological changes in our field. It became less and less conducive to run a small business, and the only choices seemed to be to exist as a major player or to get out. At that point, what seemed like a good opportunity presented itself. A long-term acquaintance who ran a small communications business decided to retire and offered to sell me the business. As our business was struggling and the communications business fitted in with my technical background, we closed the medical supply business and I took up the offer. What initially seemed like a very good move proved to be not the case and after two years, the business failed. There were several factors involved, but here is not the time or place to elaborate.

The bottom line was that in 1979, at the age of 45, I had to find employment, as we had no reserves to fall back on. Not one to sit back and lament about what had happened, I went out knocking on doors and following up employment advertisements. Within a couple of weeks I found a job with Drager, a large German mining equipment firm. I stayed there for almost a year, selling mining safety equipment. It was a very interesting time and I had the opportunity to travel extensively throughout Australia. This included visiting such places as Mount Isa, Alice Springs, Tennant Creek, as well as Tasmania, and gaining a very good insight into the mining industry.

During this period another development took place that was to have a major impact on the direction in which I would head a few years down the track. At the back of my mind I always had an idea that I would like to write, but to be perfectly honest never took this further. Perhaps the lack of time or opportunity, or perhaps the fear of trying and finding out that I

did not have the ability, held me back.

One day I was reading through one of the technical publications, a necessity of my job, when I came across an article that I thought was quite convoluted, and did not make any sense. Picking up the telephone, I rang the editor and said to him, "I really cannot understand what the article is trying to convey, and to me it is just badly written and illogical."

Being a typical editor he said to me, "If you are such a smart ass, why don't you try and do better," and slammed down the phone. Normally I am very placid until I am challenged, so that night I sat down and wrote an article on a technical topic. I posted it off to the magazine next morning and to my surprise, the editor rang me a couple of days later, saying he liked the article and would publish it. A couple of weeks later a small cheque arrived and over the next few months the magazine purchased several more articles.

Something during that period also triggered the writing of the first part of my story. Carole spent a year on Machon in Israel during 1979/80. As part of the Holocaust course she took, she visited the kibbutz Givat Chaim, which has a Theresienstadt memorial. Leafing through the card index system, she came across my name and in her next letter home raised a lot of questions. While it was not for any conscious reasons, I had not previously discussed my war time experiences seriously with the children. When Carole returned to Australia, she wanted to know all about them. We sat down and discussed the topic at length and she suggested I should make a written record, leading me to sit down and actually commit some thoughts to paper.

A NEW CAREER

Since submitting my first article for publication, I continued to write, selling material to several magazines, first in the technical area and progressively in other areas and it became a very nice side line, generating a small income. As you get older, you tend to question where you really want to go with your life and although I was quite successful at Simplex and earned a good income, I increasingly questioned what I was doing there. "Do I really want to sell things to people who don't really need them for the next fifteen or twenty years?" my mind kept asking. On our trip to Europe in 1987, away from the routine of everyday for some five weeks, my inner voice became more strident and the urge to change direction became stronger.

By this time I had built up a reasonable flow of clients who bought my articles. Sitting down I looked at the worst-case scenario. The children had left home, our mortgage was paid off and we did not live an extravagant life style. We discussed my leaving regular employment and I decided I would take a risk and work full time as a freelance journalist. While it has its ups and downs and there are slack periods, it is something I have not regretted and it not only makes life interesting, but offers a considerable amount of flexibility.

My writing has provided many opportunities to travel around Australia, as well as a couple of work related overseas trips and the chance to meet many very interesting people and to go to many places and events.

During these years I also undertook another new venture. I decided to make up for those opportunities that I had missed when I was young. Having left school at fifteen after a very minimal education, I took up tertiary study, enrolling a Bachelor of Arts course off-campus at Deakin University. I successfully completed my degree in five years, majoring in Journalism, Literature and Australian Studies and graduated in 1989. Having been 'bitten by the bug' I went on to do a Master of Arts at Monash University, also on a part time basis, graduating in 1993.

Other important events happened in the family during that decade with two marriages, Vicki to Danny Lustig, and Carole to Kim Carr. In due course our children added five grandchildren the family: Ruth, Jeremy, Seamus, Steven and Kate. The foundation of this next generation provided the family continuity, which, like in so many other families, was almost destroyed by the Holocaust. As most of our extended family perished, our grandchildren provide the living link to future continuity.

RETRACING MY STEPS

In 1987, I travelled back to Europe for the first time in forty years and decided to visit Theresienstadt. While I did not know how I would react and had considerable trepidation when the actual day for the visit arrived, I was glad I took that trip. It laid many ghosts to rest for me and in some way served as the closing of a chapter of my life after all these years.

In the physical sense, Theresienstadt, or Terezin as it is called in Czech, has reverted back

to the sleepy town it was before the war. It continues to be a military garrison; all that has probably changed over the last two hundred and fifty years is the colour of the military uniforms.

The thing that struck me as a first impression was how empty the place was. There were no people to be seen, a normal enough scene in a small country town, but the comparison between the overcrowded ghetto and this sleepy place was so dramatic, it hit me the moment I arrived. The other huge difference was that I could leave when I wanted and there were no barriers or guards to stop me.

At the time it was before the 'Iron Curtain' had been raised and very few visitors went to Terezin. Although there was a museum, it was principally devoted to the 'Heroes of the Resistance' and only a very small section was concerned with the ghetto.

In June 2001 I was able to add a further piece to the jigsaw of my life. Many German cities had been inviting 'former Jewish citizens' back to their birthplace, perhaps as a way of trying to settle the Germans' guilt feelings, or perhaps out of a genuine desire to right some of the wrongs done to the small remnant of Holocaust survivors.

My wait continued for seventeen years. In 1999 I wrote another one of my letters, but suggested that as the next century was about to arrive, their line about 'those born at the turn of the century' sounded a bit lame. Once again, German thoroughness shone through and I received a prompt reply, this time that on present indications they believed an invitation would be forthcoming in the next couple of years, by 2001.

In September 2000, they wrote that the last organised tour would take place in 2001 and if we were able to participate, a formal invitation by the Lord Mayor would be forthcoming in the near future. This invitation arrived just before the end of December, followed a couple of months later by details of travel and accommodation arrangements, as well as a comprehensive outline of the two-week program in Stuttgart.

In 1987, Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic) was still under communist rule and the ghetto museum as such did not exist. Since the fall of communism, however, this has all changed. Theresienstadt is now on the 'tourist trail' and a very large museum is now devoted to the ghetto.

I was curious to find out how the emphasis on the ghetto history had changed and also to compare my feelings fifteen years on. Going to Terezin by a local bus, rather than joining the flood of tourist tours, it was an emotional experience, that also evoked some very sensitive and, at times, disturbing feelings within me.

Since my last visit, Terezin has almost become a ghost town. The army, which had been part of the town for some two hundred and fifty years, had pulled out two years before, dealing a very major blow to its economy. The population, which under normal times was around 3,500 had dropped to 1,800, as there is little or no employment and tourism is now the only real source of income.

I wandered around the almost empty streets for several hours, just taking in the atmosphere of the place. I came away with several impressions that really made a very major impact. The first one was that there were shops that not only displayed a wide range of foods, but you could actually go in and buy them. The second was that I went into a small pub and ordered a meal, which was a very strange experience in contrast to my life there during the war years.

One of the features of the museum is the German propaganda film *The Fuhrer Gives a Town to the Jews*, or, to be correct, snippets of the original film, as the complete film have not been found. I have a copy of the thirty-minute film. In one scene, at a soccer match, the camera zooms in for a close up of one boy in the crowd. I am this boy. It was the eeriest feeling seeing the video and myself on a film that for over fifty years, I did not know existed.

The visit did stir some emotions deep inside me, but also provided another opportunity to exorcise some long hidden ghosts of the past

A JOURNEY TO THE PAST

In September 2003, I took a journey back to my past that in many ways evoked painful memories, but also provided the opportunity to arrive at a partial closure after almost six decades.

We were invited to take part by a Foundation in Stuttgart in the project - Signs of Remembrance.

The background of the Foundation, promoting the project, is an interesting one. In 1996 a hostel for foreign students in Stuttgart was torched by right-wing elements, and seven people were killed in the fire. A group of concerned citizens decided to set up a Foundation that promotes anti-racism,

fighters against prejudice and promotes tolerance and inter-racial harmony.. The name of the Foundation, Geissstrasse Seven, is the actual address of the building that has been rebuilt, and again is a hostel for foreign students.

The background to this journey is connected to the desire by Germany to remember, and show remorse, for events that took place during the Nazi era from 1933 - 1945. The Foundation, Geissstrasse 7, in Stuttgart, the city in which I was born, is currently working on a project to create a memorial at the railways station, where in 1941/1942, three deportation transports of Jewish citizens left. One went to Riga, one to Sobibor and the third and last in August 1942, to the Theresienstadt ghetto located in the Czech Republic.

As part of the project, both of us were invited back to Stuttgart, and along with leading members of the foundation, historians, 11 young people aged from 14 - 21, musician, archivists and several others took part in a three day "recreation" journey back to Theresienstadt, following the original nine hour train trip in 1942,

A crew from the local television station also came along, to film and produce a half hour documentary, which will be shown on German television in the near future..

In Stuttgart I visited the house in which I lived as a child, and the current resident, who was the son-in-law of the owner when we lived there in the 1930s showed us around, all this being recorded on camera. The next day I was interviewed for about two hours about my experiences during the war and my time in the in the Ghetto from 1942 until the end of the war in May 1945.

The main Stuttgart newspaper ran a full page story about the project, and almost half a page covered my story, complete with photograph of me as an eight year old.

The opening function, which was well attended, included several speakers, presentation of the concept of the memorial, as well as reading of sections from our respective books (in German), as well as additional interviews, and question and answer exchanges with the audience.

The next morning the party of over 50, boarded a train, and after five changes arrived in Theresienstadt some nine hours later. The next day an extensive tour of the town, lasting some four hours took place, visiting various areas where I had stayed during the almost three years during my internment. The whole tour was filmed, with extensive interviews.

Later that day, the journey back to Stuttgart took place, which was not only a geographical one from one place to another, but in many ways a symbolic one, completing the circle, from its origins to the place of internment and deprivation, and back to normality. But also one of retracing the events of past and return to an orderly world of the everyday.

A LOOK BACK – ANOTHER LINK

When I returned from the trip to Germany in 2003, my intention was that this was the closing chapter of linking with my past, and it was time to move on. I had made two pilgrimages, and this

would be the final instalment of my “Looking Back Over my Shoulder”.

But as often is the case in life, a couple of at the time, seemingly unconnected events emerged that changes this resolve.

The first one concerned writing my memoirs. When I was in Germany in 2001, I had not actually seriously sat down to write, but made contact with a number of publishers in Germany if they were possibly interested in publishing it. The response in each case was less than encouraging. On my subsequent visit in 2003, I had completed most of the manuscript, and once again made approaches to several publishers. The response was even more negative, and I received almost the same answer from four publishers, saying that a lot of this type of material had been published over the preceding 10 -15 years, and had I approached them ten years earlier they may have been interested, but now the time for such literature had well and truly passed its “: use by date”.

Some twelve months later, and we kept in contact quite regularly, he send me an e-mail suggesting that he had a friend, who ran a small time publishing company, specialising in history of Jewish communities in Germany, who would possibly be interested in publishing such a book.

The other is connected with the City of Stuttgart and the World Soccer Cup in 2006.

Now as it happens, both our granddaughter Ruth and grandson Seamus are very keen soccer players, at this stage in junior clubs. This sparked an idea that perhaps the family could travel to Germany for the World Cup that was to take place in 2006, especially as Stuttgart would be one of the venues. The idea was floated around the dinner table one night, and received enthusiastic support from the grandchildren.

After investigating the concept, plans began to firm up, and eventually became a reality. Evelyn, myself, our daughter Carole, son-in-law Kim, Ruth and Seamus made travel plans and actual flight and accommodation bookings were firmed to travel to Germany in June 2006.

The two elements now stated to merge, with the plan that the book could be launched during our visit to Stuttgart for the World Cup. At this point, another little challenge cropped up. While the publisher was quite happy to make this a pro-bono project, the cost of printing would have to be found before it could happen. Joachim looked for sponsors in Germany to get the funding, which was around 2,000 Euros. One approach was to the German Football Liga, as there was a link between football, and my appearance in the German propaganda film of the Ghetto in 1944, where I appeared briefly (all of 15 seconds) watching a football game.

So in mid June 2006, the six of us left Melbourne and travelled to Stuttgart. As luck of the draw would have it, one of the games scheduled for Stuttgart was the Socceroos versus Croatia. So the stage was set for a double event. To see the Socceroos play in the World Cup and the book of my memoirs in German launched in Germany.

Arriving in Stuttgart, my friend Joachim asked me for a favour. He is a freelance producer, making

films for television, mainly small documentaries. He submitted an idea to make a documentary about my visit to the World Cup, linked to the book, and in particular to the segment about me at the soccer game in the propaganda film. A national network had accepted the idea, giving him a rare chance to get his material on National television. Naturally I readily agreed to the idea.

But that was only the tip of the iceberg as far as publicity of the book and my visit received. I was featured in three city and seven provincial newspapers, some with full page stories, interviewed on radio, and spoke at a number of meetings, as well as several school classes. The head of the StiftungGeisstrasse, said he had never seen such wide interest in a small publication.

The televised documentary also attracted other interesting side effects. The morning after it was screened, I was walking outside our hotel, when an elderly gentleman approached me, and said he had seen me on television last night. "But you must realise that today' Germany is quite a different place from the time of your band experiences back in the 1940's" he said to me.

Following the release of the book, I and the publisher had several requests from museums around Germany for a copy of the book for their library. The StiftungGeisstrasse also lists the book in their catalogue.

The 2006 visit to Germany was a very memorable one, and besides being another link to my past, it also built a bridge not only to new generations in Germany, but also within my own family, allowing my grandchildren to participate in this connection of my worlds of the past and the present, and hopefully a more benign future. The other thing it triggered was an ambition in Seamus to perhaps one day play professional football in the European Football League.

So perhaps, the third retracing my past, will indeed be the final one, but who knows what other twist and turns life still brings in the future.

While more than six decades may have elapsed from the original event, it was still full of being a very real, and in many ways, highly emotionally charged journey, and indeed experience.

If there is to be a meaningful message from the project, it is one that we must never forget the past, but also that it important to build a bridge from the terrible events of the past to a better future, where it hopefully can never again happen.

The 2013 trip to Germany, sponsored by several Foundations in order to speak to a range of organisations about my experiences as a Holocaust survivor was an amazing experience with many highlights and unexpected events.

There were articles almost every day about my addresses. In fact there was press coverage every day for the five days in Braunschweig – quite amazing. As Andy Warhol said *Everyone is entitled in 15 minutes of fame* but I certainly got a lot more than 15 minutes

.

On this visit something surprising happened. At a small reception one evening I was presented with one of the highest awards from the state of Baden-Wurttemberg – The Gold Staufer Medal.

The citation reads – “ As thanks and recognition for outstanding services to our land Baden-Wurttemberg we honour Mr Garry Fabian with a Gold Staufer Medal”



*Presentation of Gold Staufer
Medal December 2014*

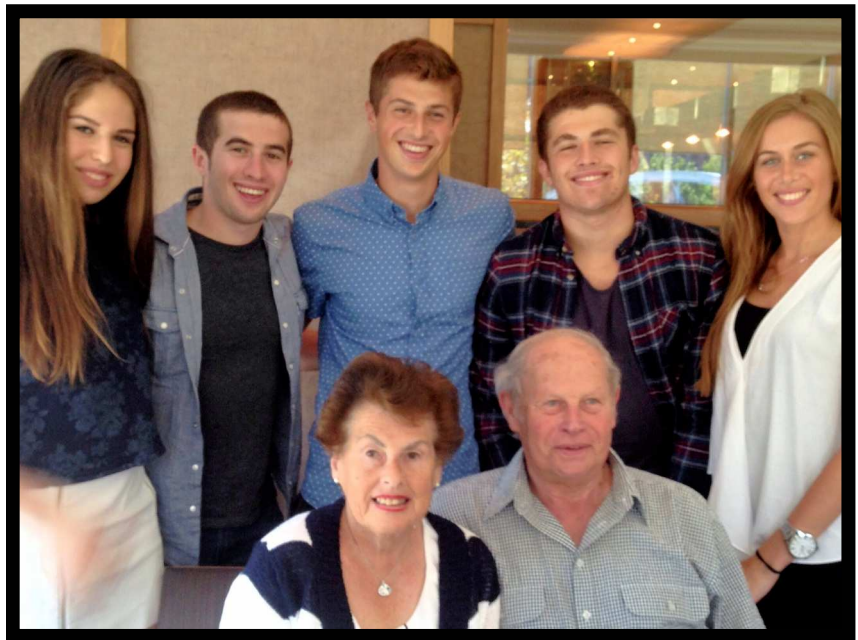
POSTSCRIPT

I have often wondered about many things. One of these is the question of how I came to survive when many did not. Was it just random chance, or is there indeed a power that guides our destinies and if so, why?

It has been said that those who forget history may be forced to re-live it. With the passing of time, we who lived through these times and personal experiences will not be here to relate them and it is important for future generations to have a first hand account. We who have survived not only have a duty to leave a testimony for the future, but indeed to honour the memory of the six million who perished, to leave a record to ensure they did not disappear without a trace into the dusty corridors of history. It has been said that if they are forgotten, they will have perished twice.

I believe all those of us who have survived see life through a different lens and that we have a responsibility to tell others about it. This becomes more urgent today, when with time less and less are left to record their experiences. We have also seen the rise of the Revisionist historians, who claim it never happened. There are thousands of stories, but it is important to leave a record behind of what really happened. Very soon it will become just another dusty chapter of history with no human element in it. We may forgive one day, but we must never forget.

This is a heavily edited version of my book “A Look Back Over My Shoulder” published in 2014.



Evelyn, Garry and our five grandchildren January 2015

An electronic version is available from I-net gfabian@iinet.net.au



Wild Violets

My Story by Kitty B



MY FAMILY STORY

Having been invited by Ralph Kley to contribute to a compilation of the Yekkes' Stories, I am starting to write my family potted history today on VE Day – May 8th 2020 while we are all 'locked down' during the Coronavirus Pandemic which itself will undoubtedly become a serious chapter in the History of the 21st Century. How strange it is to hear of us 'fighting a war against this lethal virus', when our parents and grandparents fought very different wars in the 20th Century.

To return to the celebrations of VE Day, I well remember my mother, Ruth, telling me about going to Buckingham Palace with all the other thousands of people to mark the end of the War, and she went there together with her brand new husband, Heinz, whom she had married just three days earlier on May 5th, 1945. She talked about how her new shoes hurt her so much, she had to take them off, while everyone danced in the street, waiting for the King and Queen to appear on the balcony of Buckingham Palace. A happy day! All in stark contrast to her previous thirty-two years.

Ruth Freudmann 1914 - 2015

My mother, Ruth Freudmann, was born in Graz, Austria, on August 30th 1914, one month after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand triggered the start of the Great War, the First World War which devastated Europe for the first time. Her mother, my grandmother, Martha Schwarz

1. Martha Freudmann 1908
– Graz – aged 28



was the eldest of fourteen children, only eleven of whom survived. This was a lower-middle-class Jewish family in what was Austria's second-largest city, and in spite of being the eldest child of this large family and having to look after the younger children while her mother gave birth to yet another child, Martha went on to become an accomplished concert pianist and graduated at the Music Conservatoire in Graz

1. Martha's piano thesis from the Music Conservatoire, Graz

Wiel. Maylagung der Fundamente

Fundament: G A

Umschlagungen der Konaccordes

Die Umschlagungen der Konaccordes lassen sich auf folgende Regeln auf eine bestimmte Weise bringen, die wir unten sehen werden. Sie sind in der folgenden Tabelle angegeben. Die Umschlagungen der Konaccordes sind in der folgenden Tabelle angegeben. Die Umschlagungen der Konaccordes sind in der folgenden Tabelle angegeben.

Sechstaccorde

Quartaccorde

Sechstaccorde

Quartaccorde

Umschlagungen der Dominantkonaccordes

Fund: A

In due course she married Oskar Freudmann, a fairly impecunious salesman, but an ardent Zionist, and a great book lover, who was said to be frequently wandering the streets with his head buried in the latest book. Sadly, he did not contribute in any meaningful way to the family income and Martha was left to give piano lessons and the occasional concert, to make ends meet. Meanwhile, a son, Fritz, was born in 1911 to Martha and Oskar, followed three years later by my mother, Ruth.

It was not long before the hapless Oskar was drafted into the Austro-Hungarian Army and sent to the front in what was then still Yugoslavia.

***Oskar Freudman in
Uniform c. 1916***



He returned, like so many others from the horrors of that war, a damaged man. My mother always told me that hers was an unhappy childhood, that money was short, that there were frequent arguments in the household, and in due course Martha divorced Oskar, which in what was a very provincial but close-knit Jewish community was a stigma. I think that this – coming from divorced parents - together with what was to come, left my mother, Ruth, somewhat haunted. But she made the best of what life had to offer: she learned shorthand and typing and became a secretary to the owner of a department store in Graz, spent time with her many cousins (remember her mother was one of eleven children!), enjoyed skiing in the mountains in Steiermark (Styria), she travelled to Budapest where she had family, and there she met her boyfriend, Jaene, whom she often referred to as her first love.

In 1938 Hitler marched into Austria (the Anschluss) and the country became part of greater Germany. November 8/9 1938, became known as Kristallnacht - which my mother told me was the most frightening night of her life. The Austrians, in spite of their claim of having been the victims of invasion, actually welcomed Hitler and his Nazi regime with gusto.

On that night, in Graz, my mother was visiting one of her cousins together with her brother Fritz, when a group of SS thugs came to the house, rounded up all the young Jews in the

neighbourhood and marched them into the forest just outside the city. She recounted how these Austrian collaborators forced all the young men, ranging in age from 16 to 25, to carry heavy boulders on their shoulders, taunted them, teased them, hit them, threatened them, and finally, thank goodness, left them to find their way back to the city.

It was clear to the whole family that a way had to be found to leave Graz. My mother's brother, Fritz had married by then and moved with his wife to Vienna. In due course, his wife Hansi, through a cousin of hers in the US, obtained a Guarantor who vouched for her and her husband Fritz, to go to America.

(As a side note, my uncle Fritz, settled in New Jersey, became a salesman for an American clothing manufacturer, and once the US joined the Allies in 1941, he enlisted in the American Army and was stationed in Belgium until the end of the war. Hansi and Fritz became the parents of a daughter, Judy.)

Back in Graz, my mother, Ruth, and her mother Martha, were left very much alone. My mother's wish was to go to Palestine. She, like many of her friends and cousins who were members of Zionist movements, felt very deeply about Palestine, but in due course, after many applications, she obtained a permit to come to the United Kingdom as domestic in service to a Jewish family.



**Ruth Freudmann
with hat**

However, this meant leaving behind her mother, Martha, who had struggled so hard on her own, and who, at this stage had no such permit, but Ruth assured her mother that once she was in England, she would make every effort to bring her over too.

I remember my mother telling me about the train journey in December 1938 from Graz, via Vienna, and then through Germany. She had very proudly packed all her favourite things in one suitcase (she was particularly fond of her hats, and her mother had given her a few valuables, but when the train stopped in Aachen on the border of Germany and Belgium, the German guards boarded the train, interrogated her and finally confiscated almost everything that was dear to her.

And so, Ruth Freudmann aged 24, arrived in Victoria Station to be met by a Mr Sholto, the patriarch of the family who had issued her with a domestic permit to work for them as housemaid. Here, my mother told a funny story, that on the way back from the station to the house that was to become her home for a while, Mr Scholto stopped at the Windmill Theatre, where one of his grown-up daughters was a dancer. Coming from provincial Graz, with very little English, and hardly any belongings, one can imagine just how strange she felt.

After a few months, the Sholto family agreed to arrange for another domestic permit for my grandmother to join the household, and so at the age of 59, this very talented and accomplished pianist joined her daughter in the summer of 1939, just before the outbreak of World War II. Problems arose quickly, as Martha was evidently a temperamental character who did not see her life as a cook with her daughter as a housemaid. However, they were obliged to leave that family for one reason or another, and found themselves (I believe with the help of the Jewish organisation, CBF) employed with a family in Brighton.

The family consisted of a father - an army colonel who had been retired because of a wartime injury, and his wife and two young children whom my mother grew very fond of in her role as nanny. Goodness knows what kind of English those children learned – my mother barely spoke a word of English at that stage. She told the story of my grandmother – who had always been quite difficult, needing to have fresh air all the time. Brighton being on the south coast, and this being during the Battle of Britain (1940) with German aircraft bombarding Britain every night, there were strict rules to keep the blackout blinds down and windows closed. Not my grandmother!! She needed her fresh air. With the sea air blowing and the windows open, the blackout blinds flapped at regular intervals in the breeze – and with the lights on in her room, it looked very much like there were signals coming from this house! Sure enough the local constabulary arrived at the house, my mother and grandmother, who were, of course enemy aliens, were immediately told to leave, and had to find alternative employment.

This they found at the grand home of Lord and Lady Chesham – Latimer Park in Buckinghamshire

– with my grandmother doing her best to cook, my mother scrubbing floors, lighting fires, polishing the silver and generally wondering where this was all going to end. Two foreign, Jewish provincial women, mother and daughter, one working as chambermaid, the other as cook, were to say the least, like fish out of water. But they made do until it all became too much.

Mother and Daughter had the opportunity to move to Kendall in the Lake District, where grandmother Martha, yearning for her piano, somehow managed to secure a job as organist in the local Christian Science Chapel. She thrived in this environment, back to her beloved music, but my mother was bored! Leaving her mother in the safety of the Lake District, she decided to move back to London and spent the next couple of war years, 1942-1944, working at the Jewish Refugee Agency in Bloomsbury House, using her secretarial skills and doing some translation work.

I will leave my mother's story there for the time being.

Heinz Koellner 1911 - 1990

My father was not as vocal as my mother about his past so I know less about his story. He was born Heinz Walter Koellner in Vienna, the second child but only son of Susanna and Richard Koellner, on January 4th 1911.

Susanna Koellner and Richard Kolner were, in fact, first cousins, Susanna being one of ten siblings, and Richard one of three. Like my other grandfather fighting in the Austro-Hungarian Army in the first world war, Richard was also a uniformed soldier in the German army, receiving medals as seen in this photograph.

Richard Koellner in
Uniform c. 1914



It has to be noted that both grandfathers, Oskar Freudmann in Austria and Richard Koellner in Germany, did their civic duty by fighting for their country when needed; those countries, then both

under the same pernicious Nazi regime thought nothing of taking away their civil rights resulting ultimately in their having to flee from persecution. It is no wonder that both these men undoubtedly suffered distress and torment which remained with them, their spouses, and their families for more than one generation.

Susanna came from Leipzig, from a very well-to-do assimilated Jewish family with businesses in the publishing and fur trades. Once married, Richard and Susanna moved to Vienna where they ran a moderately successful haberdashery business, producing fine lace collars and cuffs and suchlike. They were hardworking and industrious, with Susanna running the factory, while Richard travelled as Sales Manager. They had three children: Stephanie born in 1910, my father Heinz in 1911 and a younger sister, Edith.

***Suzanna, Richard,
Stephanie, Edith and
Heinz (next to his father)
Koellner c.1914***



My father, Heinz, from what I have understood, was rather difficult as a child and suffered from poor health, and with his parents preoccupied with their business, he was sent to a boarding school in the outskirts of Vienna. Subsequently, he attended art school where he showed great talent in graphic design, creating advertising slogans and the like, but Susanna and Richard felt this was not a future for their son. They sent him to Leipzig to work in the very successful Koellner family fur business, hoping that they would groom him for a career in the fur trade. This my father did not hugely enjoy, although his relatives in Leipzig lived well and so, together with his many cousins, he relished the dancing parties and social events – a bit of a bon vivant rather than learning about the fur trade. He stuck it out in Leipzig for four years before returning to Vienna just before the Anschluss in October 1938. My father had become extremely proficient in playing Bridge and basically he enjoyed the café life of Vienna, and generally living the life of a young bachelor. *He particularly enjoyed the cultural pursuits this city had to offer. For instance, he loved opera, and the Vienna Opera House was*

second to none in those days. He told me that he had queued for, and seen, Wagner's Tannhauser 27 times!!!

**Heinz Koellner,
Vienna, c.1930**



I think my father was fairly oblivious to the seriousness of the situation, but somehow, he managed to obtain a trainee permit to emigrate to London in January 1939. He, too, left his parents behind, and they, too, managed, at a very late stage to reach New York, USA late in 1939.

What I know of my father's life in London during the war, is that, having always been very adaptable, able to turn his hand to most things, he became a chef. Starting as a lowly waiter or kitchen boy in Schmidt's in Charlotte Street, he subsequently rose to become a chef at Lyons Corner House, in Piccadilly, known as the Trocadero. Lyons, being a Jewish-owned business, were very kind and secured a job for him at their branch in Bedford.

However, there came a time when he must have returned to London and tried to sign up for the Pioneer Corps. Upon medical examination, he was found to have a non-functioning kidney which was causing him problems and which needed to be removed. He was operated at the London Hospital in 1944; he told me that he could not wait to leave that hospital as soon as possible and, although not fully recuperated, he very quickly discharged himself. The next day evidently the wing of the hospital in which he had been a patient, was bombed to smithereens and utterly destroyed. A little piece of luck! To recover from what was a fairly major operation, he was sent to a nursing home in Ashford in Kent.

And this brings us back to my mother, Ruth.

We had left my mother doing secretarial work at the Jewish Refugee Agency, Woburn House in

Bloomsbury Square. Somewhere along the line, my mother suffered some kind of trauma, maybe a culmination of trying to care for her mother, trying to make a life for herself, realising what she had left behind, and not knowing where her life was going. In short she had a minor mental breakdown and ended up recuperating in a nursing home in Ashford, Kent. It must have been in the early months of 1945 and this is how and where my parents met and courted.

Coming from Austria, and with broadly similar backgrounds, they found a common link.

My father's family were highly cultured and educated and the arts and music featured strongly in their pre-war life. With my mother's mother being a pianist of concert-performance standard, even if frustrated by her economic situation, music was a fundamental element in her life.

(As a side note, Martha, my grandmother, had remained in Kendall where she continued to give piano lessons and play as accompanist for the choir of the Christian Science Movement. One has to think how very adaptable a Jewish middle-aged woman disrupted from her provincial existence in Graz, hardly speaking English, separated from her son and daughter, would have had to be in these circumstances. After the war, my grandmother lived briefly in lodgings in London, and at a certain point, my mother having essentially taken care of her mother since 1939, brother Fritz decided to assume the role of 'protector'. And so Martha, travelled to the United States, where as said earlier, Fritz had settled with his wife and daughter. In New York, this concert-standard pianist gave piano lessons and accompanied singers from time to time, but her piece de resistance came aboard the liner, Queen Mary. During the eleven years she lived in the US, she travelled several times back and forth on the liner to England to visit our family. She was invited on each voyage to play the concert grand in the ballroom of this handsome ship – and of that, she was hugely proud.)

Meanwhile back in London and both having left the nursing home, a strong bond was formed between Ruth and Heinz. They married on May 5th 1945 at Willesden Registry Office and had a small reception at the premises of Belsize Square Synagogue, which was to feature so prominently in their lives, and those of her daughter and son-in-law for years to come. Ruth and Heinz set up home in two rooms in Birchington Road, Kilburn, with next to no money between them.

After the War

Heinz, with his artistic flair and knowledge secured work as a designer of ladies handbags through a fellow Austrian acquaintance and in due course was employed by another Viennese entrepreneur who established a factory producing handbags, mainly supplying Marks and Spencer. There he remained, working day in day out, week in week out, year in year out until he retired at the age of 70.

That was how it was in those days. You got a job and you stuck at it. Ekeing out a living in post-war Britain, Ruth having given birth to a baby daughter in April 1946 barely a year after they were married.

**1. Ruth and Heinz
Wedding Photo – May
1945**



That was mostly the survivor reaction to the Holocaust. Put the past behind you, work hard, make money, establish a family in the country which gave you refuge.

My mother, Ruth, was introduced to a cousin of Heinz who, from Leipzig, had had connections in the publishing business and established a company producing scientific journals and books. Ruth, whose secretarial and book-keeping skills had always stood her in good stead, worked for this company, until it was taken over in the late 1960s by John Wiley & Sons and she continued to work for them until they moved their London headquarters to Chichester around 1980. Again, Ruth, ever a conscientious and hardworker, continued doing various secretarial jobs well into her mid-seventies.

I have already said that life was not always easy for my parents. The toll of the complete disruption to their lives, was heavy. My father, Heinz, who would have preferred the café life in Vienna and playing Bridge, was not hugely ambitious, much to mother's chagrin. She worked hard, and so did

he; having rented a house in Dollis Hill, Willesden, for the first four years after their daughter was born, they managed to put a deposit on and buy a house of their own, which my mother continued to live until her 98th year! Heinz was, what is known as, a Jack of All Trades and Master of None. He could decorate the house, fix things, tend their small garden, and in due course, Ruth and Heinz were able to afford holidays abroad, educate their daughter, and eventually, in 1967 pay for a wonderful wedding for their daughter.

My parents' social life centred very much around their, mainly Austrian, fellow refugees; they would go to the Austrian Club, known as The Blue Danube, in Swiss Cottage and hear stories and jokes told by Viennese comedian Peter Hertz, and they would nostalgically enjoy the continental cuisine at the Cosmo and the Dorice, in Finchley Road, two restaurants with a mittel-Europa ambience.

My father, Heinz, having arrived in England with no real career or profession, was a really proficient bridge player, so much so, that he found himself very much in demand from high-level players; he started to play tournaments and I remember him speaking of playing with the likes of Omar Sharif, Ian Macleod (a cabinet minister at the time) and several other grandees in the world of Bridge. My mother, Ruth, did not like being left at home long into the nights when Heinz was 'out on the town', and after a short while he felt forced to abandon this activity. He resorted to playing once a fortnight with three cronies from Austria – and that kept my mother happy! The only souvenir of those days is a silver cup which my father won at the Daily Telegraph Trophy which sits in my cabinet as testimony to what might have been a glittering Bridge career!

In 1957 my parents became members of The New Liberal Jewish Congregation at Belsize Square, now known as Belsize Square Synagogue. Prior to becoming members there, I can remember that on the High Holydays (my parents were traditional but not religious) we would 'gatecrash' the orthodox services either at Dollis Hill, Walm Lane, or Brondesbury synagogues. These services were more religious than my parents had been used to, and therefore when they sent me for one year to the very strict Hasmonian School for Girls (that's another story) they were obliged to actually become members of a 'shul'. Belsize Square Synagogue became a central focus of my life over a period of sixty-odd years; it is where I met my husband, Michael (at cheder – Sunday school - and at the youth group, Phoenix); it is where we were married, where our two sons were barmitzvahed, where Michael joined the Board of the synagogue, and where we made and enjoyed the company of many of our friends to this day.

My early life

As an only child, and with both my parents working very hard to make a living, I very much had to occupy myself. My mother worked part-time during my early school years, and the first school she sent me to was the North-West London Jewish Day School. When I was born and it came to

choosing a name for their beloved daughter, as refugees from Austrian oppression, and wanting to integrate into British life as much as possible, they resolved to pick an *aristocratic and very English name*. Hence: Katherine (meaning pure!). However, those with strong German/Austrian accents all found the pronunciation of 'TH' challenging. It came out as "s". Thus my very aristocratic English name sounded as Kessrine. During the war, my mother had evidently met a lovely young woman of whom she became very fond, by the name of Kitty. Thus it was that my parents called me Kitty, and that's what they called me at the North-West London Jewish Day School. Everyday I came home from school crying, because little children are often cruel and I was constantly taunted as "KIT-E-KAT, KIT-E-KAT".

I refused to go back to that school and was then sent to the local school, Gladstone Park Primary School where, from the start, I used my 'given' name, Katherine. By and large, I enjoyed those school years, but whenever I was asked back for tea to the homes of fellow pupils I have to say that I always felt strange. My friends' parents didn't talk with funny accents, the food they served was different from the food we ate at home, and I do have a very distinct memory of feeling 'different'. By and large, that feeling stayed with me into the early years of my grammar school - Brondesbury and Kilburn High School for Girls – although situated in what was then a fairly affluent middle-class area, there was a high proportion of Jewish girls – some 25% I recall. I made good friends with a small group and to this day meet regularly with three of them who, amazingly, are all still with their original spouses.

My social life mainly centred around Belsize Square Synagogue from the age of 11 which was, as noted earlier, when my parents joined this community. At Cheder (Sunday school) I made many friends, some of whom, again, are still amongst my closest, and from the age of about 12 we all went to the youth group known as The Phoenix. This was a thriving club, held every Saturday night, where we chatted and danced – rock and roll was at its height then – and when the club finished – around 10 o'clock, we all gathered in one of the local coffee bars to round off the evening. Life was simple, enjoyable, innocent (certainly compared with today) and a large number of us who still socialise together today are hugely nostalgic about those days.

I for one, met my life partner, my husband, Michael Brod, at Belsize – first at Cheder, then at the youth club; in July this year (2020) we will have been married for 53 years!

Michael's parentage was German/Czech and although the Germans tended to 'look down' on Austrians, we nevertheless managed to overcome this vast cultural difference!!!! Whilst my parents had lived a modest life, starting with very little, and gradually re-building their lives, by the time I started 'dating' Michael (aged 16 and a half! – still at school!), his parents were very comfortably off; whilst I was State-educated, Michael was attending Westminster Public School,

We had been 'courting' for about three years when Michael – who was in his second year of a seven-year study of Architecture - one day had a row with his parents. On a train to Chichester that weekend, he suddenly said to me he would enquire about married students grants! That was it! That was the proposal! When we told the parents of our intention, mine were thrilled, Michael's less so! Remember me saying earlier what the Germans thought of the Austrians. And from a relatively poor family!! But, we were determined, and in retrospect, considering Michael's age – he was 19 when we were engaged, and ten days under 21 when we married – his parents were incredibly accepting, tolerant and open-minded. After all, we basically came from the same background, we had a lot in common, a common past, in a way, and I think this had a lot to do with their support. Michael's father was in a financial position to give his son an allowance during his university years. From my parents, I had learned the ethos of hardwork and independence, and was working and earning enough to keep us going, until Michael qualified as an architect and ultimately started his own practice.

The rest, they say is history. We brought up and educated two lovely sons, Daniel and Nicholas, who in turn made careers for themselves, married, and each couple produced two grandchildren. From those war-torn days when both our parents had to flee their homes and re-build their lives in a strange country, comes the fourth generation – Michael and I are the second, Daniel and Nicholas the third, and our four grandchildren, Oscar, Oliver, Zoe and Theo, are the legacy our parents helped us to leave.

The photograph shows five men in suits standing in front of a wall with two copies of the Daily Telegraph newspaper. The man in the center holds a large trophy, while the others hold smaller ones. The newspapers behind them contain headlines about the 1951-52 season and the 1952 election.

175

**Woodsorrel A common
hedgerow plant found
commonly in the UK**



My Story
by
Michael B



BROD FAMILY NAME

People often ask me where the name Brod came from - was it Brodski or Brodie or Brodovich ? The answer is none of these - Brod is a fairly common Slavic surname - typically short and decidedly non-Jewish - meaning 'ford' or 'crossing'. By coincidence, my father was born in Fürth (Germany) which also translates as ford. There is a small village called Brod in Southern Moravia, now part of the Czech Republic, and this is probably the origin of our Brod family name.

ALFRED BROD

My father Alfred Brod was born in Fürth, Bavaria on 1st March 1914, and died aged 59 of heart failure in Nice, France on 12th September 1973. He was cremated and his ashes are buried in Willesden Liberal Jewish Cemetery.

He told us little about his childhood and teens, and his younger brother Helmuth was also uncommunicative about this. His assimilated and non-observant family lived very much from hand-to-mouth and moved frequently, from Fürth to Cologne and then to Düsseldorf in the late 1920's.



Alfred Brod - aged 21 - Man about Town

My father left school when he was 15 or 16, and went to work in the textile business, ending up as a 'star' salesman and supporting his family after his father's early death. He was a tall and handsome young man, taking after his mother, and always looked older than his years. In the early 1930's, he set up his own textile agency, having made valuable business contacts whilst travelling abroad. These would serve him well after leaving Germany in 1936. He was largely self-educated and espoused socialist/communist ideals in his youth.

FILIP BROD

My paternal grandfather Filip Brod was born in Vienna in April 1885 and died in Prague in 1935. He is buried

in the New Jewish Cemetery in Prague, and his grave has a memorial to his wife Meta and her mother Jette. He had brothers and sisters and other relatives, about whom I know nothing.

Filip's father - my great-grandfather - came from Boskovice (Boskowitz) in Moravia, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. One-third of its population was Jewish. Its Jewish quarter was founded in 1454, and had several synagogues and its own town hall with a Hebrew 'reverse' clock. My father told me that his grandfather was in the National Guard, and was also commander of the town's fire brigade - and was very fond of Moravian beer.

Grandfather Filip trained as a photographer in Vienna, and moved to Fürth in Bavaria around 1908. He married my grandmother Meta Rosengarten around that time, and they had two sons born either side of the First World War - my father Alfred born in 1914, and his younger brother Helmuth born in 1919. Filip had Czech nationality, but served in the German army on the Western Front. He was decorated during his four years' active service, but the traumatic experience clearly affected him, and my mother described him as a difficult and sarcastic person, who moved from job to job as a wine salesman. The family struggled financially during the massive political and economic upheavals in 1920's Germany, moving to Cologne where both sons had their bar-mitzvah, and then to Düsseldorf which was where my father first met my mother Irene in 1929.

In the early 1930's, Filip and Meta moved to Prague with Helmuth, and Filip died there in 1935 of a heart attack at the age of 50, leaving my father Alfred aged 21 as head of the family, a role he had assumed a few years earlier to support his parents and younger brother, and his grandmother Jette who lived with them. My grandparents were probably proud to consider themselves as fully assimilated German-Czech citizens, and they were not observant Jews.

META ROSENGARTEN

My paternal grandmother Meta Rosengarten was born in March 1891 in Hamm, Westphalia, and died in Chelmno in 1942. Hamm was a coal-mining town in the eastern Ruhr area in Germany, with a small Jewish community, where Meta's parents had a shoe business. My mother remembered Meta as an elegant and well-dressed woman, who was very kind to her, particularly when my mother's own parents were cross with her for marrying my father. After her marriage to Filip, Meta worked from home with a small mail-order business selling Mate-Tee - a herbal brew from South America. This was probably to prop up the family's irregular income which was never substantial.

***Alfred Brod and his mother Meta - Prague
1938***



After Filip's death in 1935, Meta remained in Prague with her widowed mother Jette - my great-grandmother -

who was born in 1862 in Bruck, Bavaria. Meta was deported from Prague to the Lodz ghetto in Poland in 1941. She was murdered by gas-chamber by the Nazis in Chelmno extermination camp in 1942 at the age of 51 - Jette was deported from Prague to Theresienstadt camp, and died in October 1942 aged 80 of so-called natural causes.

IRENE BROD (nee SPIER)

My mother Irene Spier was born in Cologne on 4th June 1912, and died aged 78 in London on 30th October 1990, following a third stroke. She was cremated and her ashes are buried with my father's in Willesden Liberal Jewish Cemetery.

She was an only child, and had a happy and relatively stable childhood in Düsseldorf, which she enjoyed in the midst of a large extended family. She went to the Luisenschule - a fee-paying grammar school - and despite political and financial upheavals and much social unrest, she graduated with a full School Certificate, and went on to the Höhere Handelsschule - a local commercial college. There she learned book-keeping, shorthand, economics, and business administration, and again graduated with a good Certificate.

***Irene Spier
aged 15***



Irene's family wanted her to join them in the family shoe businesses. However, she preferred to make her own way, and went to work for Rosenthal Porzellan Niederlage in around 1929. The company was a major pottery, porcelain, and homeware, manufacturer, with a presence throughout Europe, with Jewish origins in Bavaria in the 1830's,. The local director took my mother under her wing. and awakened her interest in 'modern' Jewish and socialist organisations, and also the Frauenliga für Frieden, a feminist organisation.

My mother became a Zionist with ideas of emigrating to Palestine and living in a kibbutz - several of her relatives had already done this. Meanwhile she worked hard at her job, and supported her parents. My mother was an attractive and petite woman with jet-black hair and striking looks - she was proud of her (thin) shape and believed in exercise, swimming, and fresh air. She told me about early morning walks with her friends in the nearby countryside, walking barefoot through long wet grass, and some naturism.

EMIL SPIER

My paternal grandfather Emil Spier was born in Kalkar, North Rhine/Westphalia in August 1873, and died in Minsk in 1941. He and his wife Hedwig have no memorial.

Their father - my great-grandfather - was Salomon Spier, also from Kalkar, and his mother was Rosa Marchand, originally from Holland. My mother was proud of being descended from a long line of Rhineland Jews, and thought that the name Spier came from the town of Speyer, which had a long-established Jewish community originally under the protection of the Holy Roman Empire. She used to joke that Rhineland Jews had arrived with the Romans, and were therefore Germany's finest Jewish community, particularly as they had survived the mediaeval crusades, and also when compared to 'upstart' Jews from Berlin who considered themselves to be superior to other Jews. There is some truth to her view, but also much fiction.



***Emil Spier and Hedwig Gaertner -
engagement in 1904***

Emil was deported with his wife Hedwig from Düsseldorf to the Minsk Ghetto in 1941. The Ghetto was a concentration and forced labour camp for 100,000 Jews, which was set up by the Nazis soon after their invasion of Western Russia in 1941. Emil died there within months of arrival, aged 68, probably in a mass execution.

HEDWIG GAERTNER

My maternal grandmother Hedwig Gaertner was born in Gross-Ostheim, Lower Franconia (Bavaria/Mainz) in August 1883, and died in Minsk in 1941. She came from a large family which was spread out over much of Germany, with some relatives in Holland, and some links back to the Sephardi community in Hamburg. Hedwig's father was Emil Gaertner who was also born in Gross-Ostheim in 1853 and died in Duisburg in 1935. Her mother was Cläri Kaufmann, born in Washington DC in 1858 and who died in Düsseldorf in 1917.

In the 1840's, Cläri's parents had emigrated to America from Bavaria, to seek a better future. They returned from Washington to Germany in the 1870's with Cläri and her nine siblings - my mother told me that they had been

frightened by race riots and it's probable that the 1861/5 American Civil War had un-nerved them.

My mother had a strong sense of family and kept in touch with her overseas relatives and also some of her schoolfriends. They were spread out over North and South America, and also in Israel. My father didn't show any interest in his 'lost' family - and we were too busy as children growing up to notice the absence of our grandparents.

Hedwig - as noted above - died aged 58 in the Minsk Ghetto in 1941 - probably of starvation.

At the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, Emil was 41 and was drafted into the German army - and was sent to the Russian front on active service. Like Filip, he also was decorated, and after the war, Emil and Hedwig set up a small shoe business in the Altstadt (Old Town) of Düsseldorf. They lived in a flat over the shop, and this is where my mother Irene grew up until she left Germany for Prague with my father in 1938.

I went to Düsseldorf with my mother in 1963, at the start of my working there for three months. She showed me the location of her parents' shop - the whole area had been destroyed by bombing and rebuilt. She had fond memories as a child of helping out in the shop, with her mother in the front sales area, and her father in the back workshop carrying out repairs and restoration of hundreds of shoes and boots. Her hard-working parents didn't own the building - they were tenants - and lost all their savings and pensions during the 1920's hyper-inflation. They lost their modest savings again in 1934/35 when their local bank went bankrupt, after its owner absconded to South America.

My mother's family were observant Jews - they had a kosher household, went to Synagogue regularly, and kept all the Jewish holydays - except that the shop was open on Saturdays. They didn't speak Yiddish, but my mother often used Yiddish expressions in her normal conversation.

MY PARENTS' TEENAGE YEARS AND EARLY 20'S

Irene met my father Alfred in 1930. He was two years younger and already working in the textile business. She remembered him as very tall, wearing knickerbockers, and part of a group of boys interested "in political and philosophical questions". A couple of years later, they were both at a socialist group meeting. Alfred gave one of the talks. and Irene asked him a question about Stalin. They met up afterwards and their relationship blossomed - she was 22 and he was 20. They became engaged about a year later in August 1935, just before the Nuremburg anti-Jewish legislation became law, after which daily life for Jews in Germany became more and more difficult, and ended in the catastrophe of the Holocaust.

***Alfred and Irene -
engagement - 1935***



My mother told me that she and Alfred were at a socialist meeting in 1932 in Cologne, which was raided by Nazi thugs. She and Alfred tried to make a run for it, and to avoid being beaten up and arrested, they tore up their membership cards and swallowed them. Her parents and grandparents, and most of her wider family, weren't particularly worried by the rise of Nazism until it was too late for them to do anything about it. They thought it would all pass and that times would revert to normal - they were patriotic and assimilated Germans with a cultural lineage going back many generations, and most of the menfolk had seen active service in the First World War. Needless to say, none of this was any use to them after 1935.

Irene's parents Emil and Hedwig were not too pleased about their daughter Irene's engagement. They were solid middle-class people, and didn't really trust young Alfred, who apart from being non-observant, was clearly a smooth operator with a silky tongue. On top of this, he had a Czech passport, and in their eyes, he was an Ostjude, a sort of inferior Jew from the east.

In 1936, the Rosenthal business was confiscated by the Nazis, and my mother's Jewish boss fled overnight to Paris. A non-Jewish manager, Willy Thiede - presumably a Nazi party member - was given ownership of the local business. Nevertheless, he kept my mother on at Rosenthal for as long as he could, and they became friends - possibly he needed her help to run the business, and he had also realised that she was supporting her parents and grandparents financially.

My parents resumed contact with the Thiede family after the war and they visited each other. When I went to work in my 'gap year' in Düsseldorf in 1963, I spent time with them. They were very tall and blonde - a perfect Aryan family. I liked them, not realising the strangeness of the family connection, and they kept an eye out for me as a young man alone in a strange city.

My mother had learnt to drive in 1935, and passed her driving test under a hostile Nazi examiner - her German driving-licence had a swastika on it. She bought her own car in 1936 - a five-year old Steyr (an Austrian-made Fiat) - and obtained an international driving licence and travel documents for the car.

Although my mother had many years of driving experience, she was not a good driver. We used to tease her about this, and her retort was that if her driving was good enough for the Nazis, it should be good enough for us.

In 1937, Irene lost her job at Rosenthal, and she found another much less well-paid job. Alfred had moved to Prague in 1936, where he set up a new and successful textile agency. Times were hard for Jews in Nazi Germany, and in early 1938, Alfred came to fetch Irene to set up house together in Prague, where they thought that they would be safe. My mother told me that parting from her parents was not easy, but she tearfully loaded up her car, and they drove off - hoping that she would be united with her parents and the rest of her German family after perhaps a few months. Sadly this was not to be, and this was the last time she saw her parents.

PRAGUE

From a current perspective, my parents' move eastwards in early 1938 to Prague in Czechoslovakia - sandwiched between Nazi Germany, nazified Austria, unfriendly Poland, and Communist Russia - seems like a very bad idea. Germany had threatened invasion in 1936 - and did actually invade western Czechoslovakia in October 1938, and the rest of the country in March 1939. Czechoslovakia was a small country, optimistically

created in 1918 as young liberal democracy, but surrounded by hostile neighbours with malign intentions - in addition, my parents did not speak Czech.

However, from their viewpoint at the time, it was a sensible move. Alfred's mother, grandmother, and younger brother already lived there. Alfred had moved there in 1936 and had many friends and international business contacts. Prague was certainly a good place to live, -with a great cultural life, good restaurants and cafés, and no political or social discrimination against Jews. Alfred and Irene were reasonably well off - they had a car and rented a nice city-centre flat. The cost of living was much lower than in Germany, and they also supported my father's family nearby. My mother went on an English shorthand course, and started working for an import/export firm - I should add that Prague was a German-speaking city, and not knowing Czech was not a problem for them.

My parents married at the main Register Office in Prague on 24th April 1938, fully aware that Prague was increasingly not a safe place for them. At the end of 1938, my parents drove from Prague to London in my mother's car, and my father's younger brother followed soon afterwards. My grandmother and great-grandmother were left behind in Prague.

During that summer, my parents had decided to get as far away as possible from the coming storm in Europe, by emigrating to New Zealand via London, hoping that their parents would follow. The intention was to become sheep farmers, through my father's British contacts in the textile business. However, having arrived in London, my parents changed their minds, and stayed in England - certainly our lives in New Zealand would have been very different - and for my part I wouldn't have met my wife Kitty, and our very special sons and grandchildren would not have existed.

Soon after the 'Prague Spring' in 1968, Kitty and I visited Prague with my parents - it was their first visit back since 1939. Curiously, we didn't ask my parents to show us where they lived in Prague, and where they were married, and even more curiously, they didn't offer to show us. Possibly they were uneasy with their painful memories of what followed after their stay there in the 1930's.

We visited the Pinkas Synagogue in Josefov, Prague's old Jewish quarter, where Meta and Jette's names and about sixty other Brods are amongst the 77,297 names painted on the walls of the synagogue, as a memorial to Jews from Czechoslovakia who were murdered during the Holocaust.

Kitty was back in Prague after the 1989 'Velvet Revolution', and revisited the Pinkas Synagogue. She found that the names had been obliterated by the hardline Communist government that had crushed the 1968 Prague Spring, because of their enmity towards Jews. However, on a subsequent visit, we found that the names had been restored, and the memorial is now intact.

We went to the New Jewish Cemetery to visit my grandfather's grave and the memorial to my grandmother and great-grandmother - my parents had recently had this restored and the memorial names added. The grave was close to Franz Kafka's grave, and this section had recently been restored and cleared of undergrowth and vegetation. However, the rest of the cemetery was completely overgrown and dilapidated - it had been locked up and abandoned for 30 years during the Nazi occupation and post-war Communist era.

LONDON

My parents' first flat in London in 1939 was in Maida Vale, and my father resumed work as a textile salesman for his various business contacts, with my mother as his secretary - and this soon grew into a small textile agency. They remained anxious about their parents who had stayed behind, and to whom they sent money whenever they could.

They soon moved to Bayswater where there was a Czech Jewish community - with a support group for other refugees, and a Jewish National Fund committee - actually chaired by my father. In later years, my father didn't show much interest in Israel, unlike my mother who raised funds for projects in Israel, and visited as often as she could.

The Second World War started in September 1939, and In September 1940, London came under heavy bombing during the Battle of Britain - The Blitz - which lasted until May 1941 - although the bombing continued until the end of the war in 1945. There were few local air raid shelters, and the alternative was the nearest underground station. In Bayswater, this was either the deep Central Line station which was overcrowded, or the shallow and partly open District and Circle Line station. My parents quickly found a block of flats in Queensway with its own air raid shelter, and moved there in late 1940.

As it turned out, the basement shelter was unusable because of regular flooding. My parents had to run to other shelters close by, often after bombing raids had started, and my mother told me that this had been terrifying. She also told me that the most frightening time had been when they were in the main shopping street in Torquay, Devon during a short holiday, when German fighter planes had strafed the street, leaving dead and horribly injured people all around them - they survived this unharmed.

After the Blitz, they moved to a larger flat in Kensington Palace Gardens - which sounds very grand but in those pre-war days was very run-down and therefore affordable - similar to pre-war Swiss Cottage and Belsize Park. The front rooms were used as the office and showroom, and the building had a good basement shelter.

By 1939, my mother's parents Emil and Hedwig were trapped in Düsseldorf, and my father's mother Meta and grandmother Jette were in Prague. Meta had somehow obtained an exit visa to London in early 1939. She travelled first to Düsseldorf to meet her Spier in-laws for the first time, and agreed to hide their jewellery and silver in her suitcase and take it with her for safe keeping - assuming that the in-laws would eventually make it to England. Meta travelled on to London and stayed with my parents, but after the Nazis invaded Czechoslovakia in March 1939, she made her way back to Prague to look after her elderly mother.

Many years ago, an old family friend told me that he and my father - both Czech nationals at that time - had driven to Prague in summer 1939 to rescue my grandmother and her mother. Their Czech passports enabled them to pass through Germany - although my guess is that they bribed their way through - but inexplicably Meta and Jette refused to leave Nazi-occupied Prague, and Alfred and his friend returned to London without them - with tragic consequences.

My parents were unable to obtain exit visas for my mother's parents in Düsseldorf - and both sets of parents met their fate at the hands of the Nazis along with most of my mother's family. This must have caused my parents

much grief in the years that followed, and for the rest of their lives - but they certainly didn't let us know about this - instead, and probably without realising this, they imbued us - their four children - with a wholly positive outlook of putting matters behind one and getting on with life.

At the outbreak of the war, there was great concern that some of the refugees in Britain were spies - either enemy agents in disguise, or more tragically genuine refugees whose families in Europe were being held hostage. Refugees were classified either as Friendly Aliens or Enemy Aliens - and most of the latter were forced to move to remote internment camps - Kitchener Camps. My parents had Czech passports and were classified as Friendly Aliens, which enabled them to stay in London during the war with full freedom of movement, and no hostility from the local population.

My mother told me that in early 1943, news of the concentration camps first started appearing. It had been widely thought that Jews had been deported 'to the East' to labour camps, and the hope was that family members were at least alive even if living in miserable circumstances. Although the Nazis had made no secret of their ambition to exterminate the Jewish race - and other 'sub-human' peoples - this wasn't widely believed. Germany and Austria had produced Beethoven, Mozart, Schiller, and Goethe, and it was hard to accept that these countries would behave bestially towards their own people. This was despite knowing that the Nazis had openly set up concentration camps like Dachau and Sachsenhausen, long before the outbreak of war.

At the end of the war in 1945, my parents learned that all of their families left behind in Europe, had been murdered by the Nazis, along with the families of many of their refugee friends. My mother wrote that 'in our heads we already knew that this had happened - so we were left on our own - no close family any more - but life goes on'.

CUMNOR PLACE - OXFORD

In 1944, V1 flying bombs and even more deadly V2 rockets caused massive destruction in London. My parents decided to move away from the danger in London to the countryside, where they would have peace and quiet, and also have regular food supplies - almost certainly through the rural black market. This continued after the war, and I remember food shopping with my mother 'at the back of the store' where no post-war ration books were needed.

They rented Cumnor Place, a large manor house just south of Oxford, and moved there with the office staff - also with a few of their friends and families. This was set up as a commune, with shared household and gardening tasks, communal meals and living quarters, English classes, and my mother in charge of the kitchen. Her photographs show this as a perpetual country house weekend, with plentiful food and wine, large cars, parties, frequent visitors including men on leave from the Armed Forces and friends from London, and people sleeping all over the place.

Whilst clearing out my mother's flat after her death in 1990, I came across five or six very large aluminium pots - somewhat bruised and battered - which she had kept from her days as chief cook at Cumnor Place. It's likely that at its peak, there were around fifty men, women, and children there.

My parents had not wanted children whilst the war dragged on. However, after D-day in June 1944, they decided to start a family - they were already in their early thirties which was considered a little late to have children. My older brother Thomas - their 'firstborn victory child' - was born on 1st May 1945 and was named after Tomáš Masaryk, the first President of Czechoslovakia - his middle name is Philip, after my paternal grandfather.

In early 1946, my parents left Cumnor and bought a large detached house in Ranulf Road, London NW2, which over the years they extended and modernised - this was our family home. *The house cost £8,000 - equivalent today to around £400,000 today - at that time a standard 3-bedroom semi-detached house was around £1,500 and the average annual wage was around £600.*

POST-WAR LONDON - BAYSWATER AND HAMPSTEAD

I was born on 27th July 1946, and my middle name is Ernest, after my maternal grandfather Emil. My parents did not want me to have a German name - in fact they took great care to speak only English in front of us children, to avoid postwar hostility to anything German.

**Irene and her two boys -
Thomas and Michael - London
1948**



I am one of four Brod children. I mentioned my older brother Thomas above, and I have two younger sisters, Monica Webb, born in 1951, and Annette Scott, born on my birthday in 1954. We are all baby-boomers and have had the great advantage of living relatively stable lives in peaceful times. In addition we had loving parents and a wonderful education, and were not spoiled (overmuch !) by our parents' wealth - mainly because of our mother's fairly spartan and no-nonsense approach to life.

My parents had prospered during the war, and began to collect antique Persian carpets - which my father liked - and other antiques including some oil paintings. My father loved his food and had put on an unhealthy amount of weight - which my mother blamed on his love of her potato-salad, and in the late 40's he had a stroke - aged only 35 or 36, from which he recovered fully - we were hardly aware of this at the time.



**The complete Brod Family - London 1954
left to right - Thomas, baby Annette, Alfred,
Monica, Irene, and Michael**

The import/export textile business expanded, and the office was now in Sackville Street, off Piccadilly, London. There was also a textile factory in Leicester with a British partner - producing wool and synthetic jersey cloth - much of this came about because of my father's ability to make connections in the right places, including Barclays Bank who supported his businesses from the start.

There was a turkey farm attached to the Leicester factory, and every Christmas we received an enormous turkey.

My mother always retained a strong German accent, whereas my father had perfected his English and was a formidable presence. In addition to his financial ambition, my father was also very ambitious socially, and was successful in socialising at all levels of society - very much to his advantage.

***My sisters Annette and
Monica - 1960***



Around 1949/50, my father decided to move on from textiles, and aimed at becoming the foremost Persian carpet dealer in London, with a large Piccadilly showroom, frequent exhibitions, and cocktail parties for the rich and powerful. However, he changed his mind and decided instead to set up an art gallery. He attended evening classes at the Courtauld Institute, and visited museums all over Europe, usually with my mother. He met up with museum directors and also commercial art gallery owners, and even set up - for a short time - a small gallery in Cologne with a German partner - only five years after the end of the war.

In 1954, the Alfred Brod Gallery opened, specialising in 17th-century Dutch and Flemish paintings. My father had teamed up with a lady from the Czech community in London - Julia Kraus - who had fallen on hard times - and also invested in her husband's wholesale food business.

The gallery was the centre of our family life as children and teenagers - in fact my parents' lives were multi-faceted and much as I would like to record their further life stories in detail, this will have to be elsewhere. The Brod Gallery prospered and became a significant part of the London art dealing world - my parents moved to a splendid flat near St. James's Park, and my father's interests expanded into other spheres. My mother also led an independent life and travelled extensively with her friends. My father died suddenly in Nice aged 59 in 1973 and my brother Thomas took over the Brod Gallery. My mother gradually recovered from the loss of her life partner, and led a busy and fulfilled life until her death in 1990.

CHILDHOOD AND PRIMARY SCHOOL

I had a very happy childhood with my siblings. Although we lived in grand style in a large house, with domestic staff, regular holidays, two cars - including a Rolls-Royce - we were not particularly spoiled. We had to earn our pocket money and help with the house, mow the lawn, wash the cars, walk the dog, and make ourselves useful in the gallery on Saturdays and holidays - in addition to doing as well as possible at school and not being late with homework. During grand dinner parties at the house, my brother and I served drinks and nibbles, and waited at the table - occasionally one of the guests would slip us a coin which was much appreciated, and we got to talk with some very interesting and influential people.

At the age of 9 or 10, my brother and I were paid for working in the Gallery during school holidays. This was the mid 1950's and we travelled alone on buses and the underground - I vaguely recall my first solo tube journey at the age of 8 from Finchley Road station to Piccadilly - and occasionally cycled the five miles from home to work. Our pay was five shillings (25 pence) each per day - equivalent to around £7.50 today. We were given a further five shillings for lunch, and my brother and I would go to the Salad Bar at Lyons Corner House. This was a fixed price unlimited buffet, and we competed with each other and with other miscreant children to pile as much food as possible on to our plates, always taking much too much and leaving it unfinished. Maybe this was our reaction to always having to finish all our food at home, and not being allowed to waste food - ever.

My mother's attitude to health is best described as robust, and going to the doctor was very much a last resort. We were generally told to put up and shut up - even going to bed was frowned on unless we had a high temperature or insufferable stomach-ache. We went on regular picnics and country walks regardless of the weather - my father was never with us. Our pocket money was modest compared to some of our friends - but I never felt that this was a hardship.

In the late 40's, my brother and I went to a kindergarten - The House on the Hill - in Netherhall Gardens, Hampstead. This was run by two very strict but kindly refugee ladies, and was very popular with refugee families - in fact my future wife Kitty was also there but I don't remember meeting her - we were 2 or 3 years old.

I moved on to a private nursery school - Windrush School in Eton Avenue - and then to a private preparatory school - Hereward House - also in Eton Avenue. At that time, the three locally available state primary schools were overcrowded and drastically under-resourced. One was dominated by large groups of itinerant Irish children - another was a religious Church of England school - and the best one, Wessex Gardens, was full up and just outside our catchment area. My parents decided that my brother and I would continue to be educated privately - a few years later, my two sisters started state school at Wessex Gardens, and subsequently moved on to private education.

There was some sort of scandal at Hereward House, and we were moved to a smaller preparatory school - Lyndhurst House - which was well-run with small classes and strict discipline. I was 8 years old and enjoyed it very much. We were usually driven to school in a car-sharing arrangement, but we made our own way home on public transport. I remember walking with friends to Swiss Cottage, crossing busy Finchley Road - often staying to tea at one of the friends' homes - and taking the bus home. The standard bus fare was 2d (tuppence) and as a child I paid half fare - 1d - and equivalent now to around 10p.

In 1958 there was a bus strike which lasted for several weeks. We queued at bus stops - children and adults - and private cars and vans (complete strangers) would stop for us and take us to our home bus stop or even to our front doors. I'm not sure that London was a safer place then than now - but clearly our parents thought that it was, and we children had no real sense of danger, even when walking home alone in the dark.

Our house had a large basement playroom, and a good-size garden - ideal for us children to play in and with a lot of time on our own. Our garden was next to school playing-fields, beyond which lay Hampstead Cemetery. We and our playmates would climb over the garden fence into the playing-fields, run the gauntlet of the rather unfriendly groundsmen, and climb over the high wall into the old cemetery, which was overgrown and had very few visitors. I can't remember what we did when we got there - probably playing hide-and-seek or pretending to be ghosts.

The playroom also housed my father's 5000-volume library - mainly art books and catalogues, and a number of rare old books. There was a wonderful 18th century set of Palladio's Ten Books on classical architecture, which I had set my heart on, and I even offered my father to pay for them. Unfortunately, when my parents moved from the house to their grand flat, most of the library was sold including the Palladio books, which made me very cross at the time.

We had bicycles, and from the age of around 10, we cycled all over the place. I remember taking my bike with some friends on the underground to Heathrow West station, and then cycling out to Heathrow Airport, which in those days had a visitor centre. My interests included model planes, and photography - I had a makeshift photographic darkroom in a cellar at our house, and a model railway in another cellar.

At Lyndhurst House school, the art master was Mr Meyer - a lovely German refugee with a comical accent, whom we teased mercilessly. He was quite a well-known painter and exhibited in local galleries. In art class, I was working on a snowy landscape scene, and the colours ran into each other, ruining my painting. However, Mr Meyer thought that this was a work of genius, and I was awarded the school's Major Art Prize - which was very helpful when applying to secondary schools. I should mention that both my brother and I had a degree of colour-blindness (apparently it ran in my mother's family), but this didn't interfere too much with our artistic efforts.

When I was 11, I passed the 'eleven-plus' examination for entrance to state secondary schools. I was offered a place at Marylebone Grammar School, which my parents accepted. This was a very good school - but at the last minute my parents decided that I should go to a public (private) secondary school. They wanted my brother and I to be perfect English gentlemen, and that with their sons at public school, they were now fully British - they had obtained citizenship in the late 1940's. I'm sure that social competitiveness as well as wanting the best for their children (my sisters also went to a public school) played a part - as well as being able to afford the school fees.

One of my father's upper-crust refugee friends had suggested that prestigious Westminster School was the place to go - this gentleman's son was already there. My brother duly passed the entrance examination, and one year later in 1959 I sat for Westminster's 'Challenge' examination - and also took the common entrance examinations in case all else failed - and passed them all before my 13th birthday.

BELSIZE SQUARE SYNAGOGUE

My parents joined the New Liberal Jewish Congregation - now Belsize Square Synagogue - in the late 1940's. This was founded in 1939 by a small community of mainly German refugees with some Austrian and Czech members, and was a natural home for my parents and many of their friends - it would also provide their children with

a liberal Jewish education with 'continental' values.

The Synagogue community formed a large part of our lives. As children, we went to the Sunday-morning religion classes which had excellent teachers, and where I first met my future wife Kitty, and many other children who remain close friends sixty years later. Music was an integral part of Synagogue life, and we sang in the Childrens' Choir - which provided lots of opportunity for mischief. There was also a Saturday afternoon childrens' club. My brother and I had our barmitzvah there - in 1958 and 1959 - followed by grand dinner parties in our house for the 'grown-ups' and dancing parties for us (Kitty and her friends came to my dancing party).

There was a Saturday evening club for teenagers - the Phoenix - and this was a social hub through our teenage years - where Kitty and I got to know each other properly. Club evenings usually comprised a debate or talk, followed by dancing - rock'n roll had arrived from America and we jived happily and innocently. There were rambles and excursions during school holidays, and some voluntary work to support older members of the congregation. After the club closed at 10pm, we would slope off to a local coffee bar - this was cool thing in 1950's London. The streets were quite safe for us - the Teddy Boys had arrived (they were smartly-dressed gangs of white youths who went around causing trouble) - but by and large nothing too terrible happened.

WESTMINSTER SCHOOL

I was a lucky pupil - I had no difficulty in swotting and didn't suffer from pre-examination or interview anxiety. This meant that I jumped the first year at Westminster and found myself in the same year as my older brother Thomas - which was rather unfair on him. However, we had different friends at school and I was in the science stream - he was in modern languages.

Westminster School was a completely new environment for us. We were day-boys, whereas the majority of boys were boarders. The 450-pupil school was an Anglican (Church of England) establishment - attached to Westminster Abbey - and had a six-day week. There were very few Jewish boys. We all attended Abbey every morning for a service, and when the Anglican boys and all the masters knelt for prayer, we were left sitting in our pews. In the beginning, this felt rather awkward, but I came to enjoy the Abbey services and the music, and I particularly liked the boisterous Christmas carol services - and all of this gave me some sort of insight into Christianity, which was useful in later life.

I took my 'O' levels just before my 15th birthday and passed them all. I did well at rowing and ended up in one of the school eights - competing in various races on the Thames. I particularly liked sculling on my own on misty days at low tide - a very special experience.

Encouraged by my parents, I took on holiday jobs. At the Gallery, I had set up a small photographic studio in a cupboard to photograph the extensive drawings stock, which saved the gallery a large amount of money in professional photographer fees. Apart from this, a family friend had a small food import business, and I worked in their docklands warehouse - for which I had to join the Transport and General Workers Union.

Kitty and I started 'getting serious' after our 16th birthdays in 1962, eventually marrying on 16th July 1967, so that we were together - more or less - for my later school years and for my college years - and Kitty of course was a large part of my life during that time.

I had always been very interested in cars - particularly their technology - and used to draw them and their engines. I went to the Earl's Court Motor Show several times on my own, looking at engines and suspensions, talking to the salesmen, and probably making a nuisance of myself. In the late 1950's, Italian designers such as Pininfarina and Bertone were pre-eminent - and I used to draw their sharp-edged and stylish cars, and imagined a career as a car designer.

I had met the chief designer of the Ford Cortina at the Gallery, and he convinced me that going to Loughborough University's automotive engineering course, and becoming a car designer in Britain, was not a good career choice. My father then suggested that I should consider becoming an architect.

I had met other architects working on alterations and extensions to our house - but initially I wasn't attracted to architecture. It was fairly clear that law, accountancy, banking, and even medicine, were the 'must-do' careers, and that most architects were not well-paid and not particularly respected - and that architectural practice was a lifetime of trouble and hard work.

I went to the careers master at school - he couldn't remember having advised any other boys about architecture, and thought that the last architect from Westminster School had been Sir Christopher Wren. He advised me that I should read archaeology at university and go on from there - completely useless advice. In those days, public schools were not truly involved in careers advice, and the assumption was that families and friends would point boys (and girls) in the right direction - generally through the old boys' network.

However, the more I looked into it, the more interested I became, and from that point on I focussed entirely on architecture until the end of my working life - a period of sixty years.

Westminster School was completely oriented towards Oxford and Cambridge Universities, and only Cambridge had an architecture school. I duly took my maths and science 'A' levels, and went for a Cambridge interview. I knew that this had not gone well - I was not well prepared, and my exam results were lower than predicted, because I had broken my leg ski-ing and missed one school term.

However, on my own initiative, and not really knowing anything about it and stubbornly not taking advice from anyone - I had applied to the Bartlett School of Architecture at University College London. After a very pleasant interview which had little to do with architecture, I was offered a place for 1964.

Westminster School grumpily acknowledged my red-brick university place, and asked me to stay on for the full year after 'A' levels, to take 'S' level exams - mainly to boost their informal ratings. I was keen to leave - I had enjoyed my school years and taken part in choral concerts and school plays - but it was time to move on - and I left in December 1963.

CARS AND MOTORCYCLES

When my brother was 16, he bought a scooter, and I followed by buying a motorcycle for £25. After a couple of years, we each bought larger and noisier motorbikes - Thomas had a Velocette 500 and I had a Matchless 650 - and travelled all over the place on them, even taking my father to work on the pillion, and very rarely my then girlfriend Kitty.

It is almost incomprehensible why our socially ambitious parents allowed and even mildly encouraged this. Our neighbours in our smart road were appalled, as were many of my parents' friends - although I can recall some of the menfolk surreptitiously asking to have a go on our bikes.

As soon as we could drive a car, my brother and I were assigned driving jobs. This comprised driving my two sisters to school every morning before going to college - this took up to an hour-and-a-half out of my working day, and also delivering pictures - and hanging them in Clients' homes - for the Gallery. In addition, I was constantly at Heathrow airport dropping off and picking up my parents - they travelled extensively - and also Clients for the Gallery. I would also collect Clients for my parents' dinner parties and take them back to their homes or hotels.

We looked after the motorbikes ourselves, doing regular maintenance, and even did some maintenance on the family cars - not the Rolls-Royce. I sold my bike when I became engaged, and my brother Thomas carried on with motor-cycling until his early thirties - he had one of the first 'super-bikes' in Britain, which was a terrifyingly powerful monster.

GAP YEAR

I had nine months to fill before university, and it was decided that I should work abroad to improve my languages. I went with my mother to Düsseldorf, visited the Thiede family, and ended up living at the YMCA and working in a photography business in Düsseldorf's Bond Street. I worked mainly in the shop, and in the darkroom and photo processing factory, and also as a party photographer - and enjoyed all of it enormously. Most of the staff treated me as a curiosity, and of course we discussed the war and its aftermath - difficult conversations.

I remember playing a Beatles record during a staff coffee break, and how shocked everybody was by the new British pop music. One day, a grizzled old man came in to the shop, and asked us to restore his torn and damaged wartime photos, which showed that he had been an SS officer. There was a stunned silence, followed by the business owners throwing the man out - he screamed pathetic abuse at them - and the owners apologising to me. I was grateful but embarrassed - this was after all about my family and not me.

Two new Japanese cameras were brought in on day for our appraisal, and we concluded that they were greatly inferior to German cameras - and had no future. We were of course completely wrong - within a few years Japanese cameras had taken over world markets, and the German camera market had virtually collapsed under the competitive onslaught from Japan.

I had my motorbike with me, and I spent my weekends exploring the wider area, visiting churches, battlefields and cemeteries, and looking at modern buildings.

After three months, I decided it was time to move on. My parents had friends in Paris to keep an eye on me - they had survived the war there - and I moved into a small room in a cheap hotel. I wasn't successful in finding temporary work, and the friends, who had a small textile business - suggested that I work for them. I learned to type (badly), worked in their office and packing-room, and best of all assisted their van driver. We delivered all over Paris including some very murky areas, and spent as much time as possible sitting in workmen's cafés with the driver's equally idle friends.

I also delivered textiles - samples and small packages - on my motorbike, and got to know Paris very well. On weekends I explored the city, looking at modern buildings and museums/churches - and synagogues. Kitty and I wrote endless letters to each other - inevitably her more than me - and she has kept our letters to this day.

UNIVERSITY

I didn't realise how lucky I was to have chosen the Bartlett School. It had recently been transformed from an old-fashioned 'beaux-arts' school, into a technology-based modern college similar to the European Technical High Schools. The student population was diverse, the teachers and lecturers were drawn from many walks of life, and the head of school was a leading hospital architect who had recently been appointed as a Labour life peer, and whose wife was a lady-in-waiting to the Queen. We had marvellous guest lecturers, and all sorts of people including Members of Parliament, eminent sociologists and economists, obscure international politicians (always socialist/communist), the high-technology guru Buckminster Fuller, and even the actress Julie Christie, came to talk to us.

We used to joke that it was obvious that our head of school was a Labour peer, because he sat in the front of his limousine with his female driver. In the early 1980's, the Anthony Blunt scandal broke - this was a Communist spy ring at the heart of the British socialist establishment and also embedded in the monarchy - and I became convinced that our professor was part of the ring. I'm not entirely sure about this now, but what little I do know does point towards his involvement as the 'Fifth Man'.

The university years passed quickly - this was a five-year course with a BA/BSc after three years and an MA/MSc after a further two years.

Before starting university, I had worked for Gerd Kaufmann - a distant relative who was an architect - for a few weeks as an unpaid intern. During the university holiday breaks, I worked for other practices, and I was also working on my own early projects - mainly house extensions for friends - and as a freelance draughtsman for two firms of surveyors. All of this was helpful to me both as additional income, and in securing my future as an architect.

I was lucky with my university examinations - I gained a first-class bachelor's degree with honours, and was given the Donaldson Medal, and also shared the Walpamur Prize for teamwork with fellow students. As part of the master's degree, we had to produce a technical dissertation. My dissertation was about airport terminals and in particular the size and design of queuing spaces, and was full of obscure graphs and complex equations. This clearly impressed the examiners, even if they (and I) didn't fully understand them, and I was awarded a Master's degree with Distinction.

MARRIAGE

Kitty and I married on 16th July 1967, soon after my first degree. Kitty was just over 21, and because I was ten days under 21 and considered to be a 'minor', I needed my parent's formal consent!

Our wedding was marvellous - arranged by Kitty's parents - mainly her mother Ruth. Kitty looked absolutely beautiful in her simple wedding gown and head-dress. My father was a difficult man and used to getting his own

way, but Ruth - my future mother-in-law - stood up to him with Kitty's father Heinz meekly in tow behind her - and in the end everything worked out well for everybody. The Jewish ceremony was at Belsize Square Synagogue - my brother was best man and we had four bridesmaids - my two sisters and two of Kitty's cousins. The party was at the Kensington Palace Hotel, and the two families' friends - from rather different social groups - got on very well. We had a week-long honeymoon in the Mermaid Hotel in Rye, Sussex, which was magical.

During my first three student years, I lived at home and my parents paid me an allowance - I also received a further education grant from Barnet. Kitty was already at work - she later went to work in the Gallery but that is another story - and her salary combined with my modest allowance, freelance work, and holiday jobs, meant that we could rent a small flat in Belsize Park and enjoy a simple but good lifestyle - we didn't have a car, and didn't want to have one.

In the late 1960's, changes were afoot everywhere - political, economic, and social - and good pop music was everywhere with The Beatles, The Rolling Stones, Bob Dylan and many others. This was a great time to be living in London, and very much less expensive - relatively speaking - than in 2020. However the grand socialist vision of the Wilson Labour government had begun to fall apart, with devaluation of the pound, inflation, massive cuts in government expenditure, strikes, and general unrest and dissatisfaction. This didn't affect us directly - Kitty's job was stable and I was earning from my various projects.

Back in 1966, my father had moved the Gallery from Sackville St to larger new premises in St James's - in the new Economist Building development. I helped with the design and fitting-out of the new Gallery, and was delighted to do this for the family business. In 1969, my parents moved to a splendid modern apartment in St James's - a short walk from the Gallery - and I worked as their architect on the major refurbishment of their flat.

The gallery lease included a flat at the rear of the development, which was used as offices for the Gallery and also as a London base for visitors. In 1972, my father let me set up office in the flat - rent-free - which was very generous and very helpful at the start of my own architectural practice.

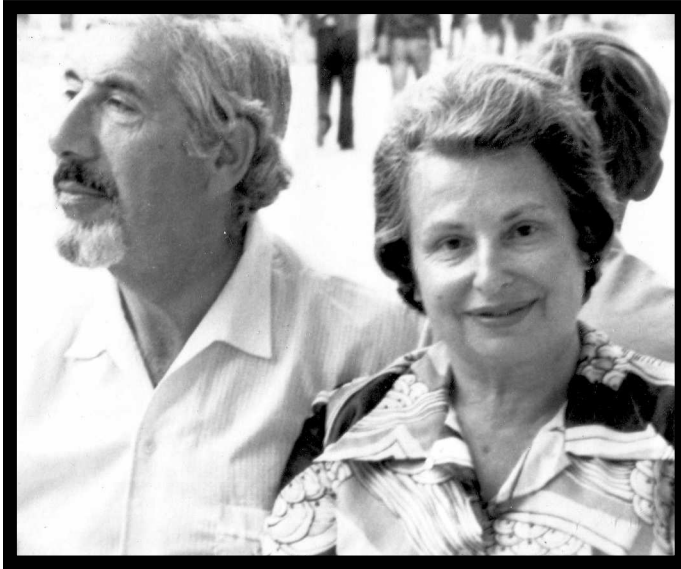
FAMILY

Kitty and I had - and still have - a good family life. We originally had plans to move to Canada, but changed our minds and stayed in London. In 1969, Kitty became pregnant with Daniel, who was the first grandchild in both our families, and created much excitement. We moved from our Belsize Park flat to a newish house in Walton Gardens, Wembley Park, which was a nice area with good shops and a local underground station - and with many friends locally who were also starting families. We resumed our teenage friendship with Antony and Marion Godfrey, who lived nearby, and we have - more or less - shared our family lives for the past 50 years. Daniel was born on 30th April 1970.

In the late 1960's and through to the late 1970's, middle-class life in Britain was affordable on relatively modest salaries - in subsequent years this has changed dramatically, and we now live in a much more polarised country. This is no more apparent than in the house prices - particularly in London. Our first flat was rented - £10 per week - and the landlord (a large property company) paid us £750 to move out so that the flat could be put up for sale at £4,500. The landlord had offered us the flat for £3,500, but mortgages for flats weren't available then, and I didn't want to ask my father for a loan.

Our new house in Wembley Park had cost £8,000 and its value doubled during the early 1970's during the 'Barber Boom'. My father was keen to divest some of his wealth - to all four children - and made £20,000 available for us to move to a larger house. We found the perfect house in Chorleywood, Hertfordshire - but both our parents were unhappy about us living outside London, and through lucky circumstances, we found a large Edwardian house in Platts Lane, Hampstead, and bought it - exchange and completion - four days after first seeing it - in early 1973.

Our second son Nicholas had arrived on 19th August 1972, soon after my brother's first son Alex - and the second post-war generation had now taken off - eventually there were eight Brod grandchildren. and my mother had the pleasure of knowing all of them before her death in 1990.



***My father and mother in
1973 - a few weeks
before his death***

My father died suddenly in September 1973, leaving my brother Thomas in charge of the Gallery and also responsible for my mother's finances. Despite the Gallery's success, there were some serious financial issues at this time, and this caused some problems in our family, including my having to vacate my office in the Gallery flat, and temporarily move my growing practice to our house.

We lived happily in the Platts Lane house for fourteen years until 1987, and modernised it in several phases. Our boys Daniel and Nicholas went to a local nursery school and then to Fitzjohns Primary School, which was a good local state school. After a few years they moved to St Anthony's - a private preparatory school and then on to University College School. In 1986, with our two boys growing up, and Kitty in full-time work and making a career for herself, we moved to our current flat in Belsize Lane. The rest - as they say - is a separate story.

CAREER

I enjoyed being an architect, and I still enjoy architecture - enormously.

My career had its ups and downs - and I was lucky enough to have two separate and successful partnerships with sensible, talented, and straightforward people - and survive three major recessions and a few minor blips over 50 years. My practice won a few prizes and designed some rather nice buildings, including a brand-new synagogue in Southgate and the refurbishment of our own Synagogue in Belsize Park. One of my first large buildings - an office building in 1974 - has already been demolished and replaced by a new building. My final

partnership - for sixteen years - was with a younger and very talented Scottish architect - we learnt a lot from each other and are the best of friends. The rest - as they say - is also separate story.

POST-SCRIPT

My parents had clearly been in love as young people, despite coming from different backgrounds. My mother would have been happy as a kibbutznik, whereas my father had grand ambitions. We didn't always see this at the time, but I'm certain that as the years went by, my mother - who was a very warm person - always loved my father. He grew into a very formidable and somewhat aloof and pompous person, with a terrible temper, very impatient, and often difficult to be with. He loved women, and they loved him - a real ladies' man - and he certainly had a number of outside relationships - but I'm sure he loved his family and was proud of us four children as we grew up - each in our separate ways.

I believe that my father's personality came not only from his inherent character and original background, but also from the tragic loss of his family including his failed efforts to rescue his mother and grandmother. His heyday was in his mid-fifties, and around that time he had his portrait painted. We recently found the portrait, which had been mislaid for many years, and it hangs in my study. It shows a handsome but rather austere and imposing man, and I'm happy to have it looking over me whilst I am writing this.

Like so many refugee families, we hardly talked about the negative aspects of my parents' pre-war lives and the heart-breaking loss of parents and relatives. They were probably trying to protect us, and also did not wish to revive their painful memories. I'm grateful that instead of burdening us four children with their inner sorrows, they instilled us with post-war optimism and a positive attitude towards Germany - but I do regret not asking more questions at the time.

When my mother was in her 70's and with the arrival of grandchildren, she became concerned that our European and Jewish heritage would be diluted and would eventually vanish, and she set about writing her life story - also of my father Alfred - and their family histories. She started writing after her first stroke in 1982, and told me that the thought of it being unfinished kept her alive in hospital during her second stroke two years later. Fortunately she completed it before her third stroke and death aged 78 in 1990. I have relied very heavily on this extraordinary document, and am immensely grateful to her for its existence, and for her persistence in compiling it, which cannot have been easy for her both emotionally and physically.

***Kitty and me
(Michael) - 1916***



I've also relied on my wife Kitty - my life partner - without whom I would not have written this, and to whom I am eternally grateful.

16th June 2020 -



Bluebells

My Story
by
Joan N



I was born on 19 November 1946 in Johannesburg and named Joan after my paternal grandmother Johanna.



JOAN

My parents, Lieselotte Katz (Liesel) from Grevenbroich, a small town in Germany who married Arnold Helmut (Harry) Katz from Cologne were not related but coincidentally met in 1937 when Harry was saying farewell to his parents to emigrate to South Africa. Liesel was doing the same with her only brother Walter, born on 2nd May 1915, so their paths briefly crossed at that point.

Liesel's parents were Alexander (Alex) Katz, born 4th August 1882 who married Elfrieda Vohs, born 29th June 1883, from Munchen Gladbach the family records going back to Moses Vohs in 1650.

They lived a very happy life in the town close to the railway station as Alex was a "Kaufman" - a horse and cattle dealer. This profession was a common one for Jews and it was already in the family from his father and uncles who worked hard and had a good life. The family were established for generations, trading locally and further afield with people in Brussels and East Prussia.

**PARENTS ALEX
ELFRIEDA, CHILDREN
WALTER & LIESEL**



As with all families, life began to change in the late 1930s and they allowed their son Walter to leave for South Africa in 1937. Liesel attended the local Catholic school but left after a swastika was carved into her school desk. Another very unpleasant robbery happened whilst she was at home. As things deteriorated they tried to arrange for Liesel to emigrate to Palestine, but it was with much difficulty due to the fact that she was a witness to the robbery. She did not have authorization to leave from 1935

until late 1939. This was the last time she saw her parents.

Her father believed that since he had fought in the First World War and was a true German citizen that nothing could happen to them. His sister Hanschen, who was in a mixed marriage, was hidden and she survived. Liesel's other aunts left for South America. Alex realised things were so bad too late, and they were left trying to get visas to the USA or anywhere else. Very late in the day Alex and Elfrieda fled in the night across the border into Belgium, believing they would be safe as they had connections in Brussels and Liesel would be able to send money for them to join her in Palestine. She tried desperately to get her parents out via The Red Cross but sadly with no success.

Only recently we obtained documentation outlining their desperate attempts to escape and pleading with the authorities for medical help and an exit to Palestine. Sadly, we also now know they were betrayed, imprisoned in France and their fate was to be sent to Drancy. On 2nd September 1942 they were transported to Auschwitz never to be seen or heard of again. Harry's mother Johanna was widowed when Carl Katz died in 1940 of cancer of the liver. She was moved from her family home in Severin Strasse to a small flat with their bookkeeper. They were both deported to Riga on 6 December 1941 and unfortunately no trace of her fate has ever been revealed.

***STOLPESTEIN FOR
JOHANNA KATZ***



Harry's non-Jewish friends were kind to her during those days as they reciprocated the kindness the Katz family had shown them during hard times. These friendships remained solid after the war into their old age. His family were well established in the meat trade as butchers and sausage makers - a very close and extended solid family observing Jewish traditions, and although not kosher or orthodox, they were German and proudly Jewish. My father's Barmitzvah was held in The Roonstrasse Synagogue, with celebrations held at the Dom Hotel opposite the famous Cologne Cathedral.

***FAMILY KATZ FROM
KOLN CARL JOHANNA
HELMUT & MICHAEL***



Harry left Germany after antisemitic incidents in the meat market. He was sent with a trunk of quality clothes including a great winter coat. This travelled with him all his life and is now used as an educational object in the Koln Documentation Centre It weighed a ton and was certainly not needed in South Africa!

He arrived in Cape Town to Nationalist demonstrations in favour of sending the refugees back home. Luckily, he had other cousins there, and got a job at a roadside burger joint called Uncle Willy's (forerunner to McDonalds). He fell in love with the owner's daughter Gerda and they were married. Unfortunately Gerda fell in love with her piano teacher and they divorced. Their 3 year old son Ronny stayed with his mother, later emigrating to New York aged 9.

Harry decided to join the South African Air Force, after his marriage collapsed and was posted to North Africa. Having been a butcher they allocated him to be a cook, much to his surprise as he had never cooked in Germany as this was done back home by staff. He was trained and served the officers. He did very well but never really cooked again at home as we had servants in South Africa and he was a full-time butcher.

My mother Liesel made a new life for herself in Palestine. She was sad and lonely and struggling unsuccessfully to get permission from the British Mandate. She made friends and with a business partner opened a shop at 14 Ben Yehudah Street, Tel Aviv. They knitted and crocheted garments and built a little business called Hannah. When Harry had 'leave' from the army he visited Tel Aviv on recommendation of her brother Walter who said "if you ever get to Palestine perhaps you'd like to visit my sister" That's where their story began. My parents actually fell in love in Palestine when my father looked her up. Photos taken at Mount Scopus show that all was wonderful, other than that she was a civilian and he was in the armed forces.

In order to marry Liesel joined the Women's Royal Air Force and eventually they had permission to be married in Cairo on 18th August 1945. Both of them were demobbed and they went to South Africa in early 1946.

**LIESEL AND HARRY'S
WEDDING IN CAIRO**



I was born later there and was actually under the Chuppah for their Jewish Marriage ceremony! Two years later my sister Marion was born. We grew up without grandparents and that is always a reality that made us aware that something was different, as not much was said but we always sensed a certain sadness.

We had a very happy childhood with cousins, aunts and uncles some of whom were not related, but were extended refugee families that were like family.

MARION AND JOAN



My friend's ancestors mainly came from Lithuania and were well established in South Africa. My parents had German accents and that made me feel different.

We grew up in a Jewish community and attended Hebrew Cheder classes daily learning biblical and spoken Ivrit. I had a Bat mitzvah in May 1960 at Shavuot with another girl and it was a very special occasion. My portion was The Ten Commandments.



BATMITZVAH

My mother got very involved in my nursery school for many years and was until we left South Africa. She was an active person on many fronts - arranging parties, theatre, holidays, ballet classes etc and made our family life interesting and busy. She was a homemaker who ran the home with the help of our African maid Mary and 'houseboy' Petrus who had accommodation in the backyard. They left their families back in the townships and although we were very fair and kind, theirs was a second class citizenship that I only fully understood when we came to England.

My mother helped my dad in his butchery business as well. My Dad was a typical responsible breadwinner and master of the

house. He liked to sit in a comfortable chair and listen to the news and have his meals served and children were encouraged to be seen and not heard! It wasn't strict but they had their traditional roles.

In the long summer holidays my sister Marion and I went away with youth movements. It was great fun as we went by train for 2 days down to the coast to Hermanus for several weeks.

I was quite sporty, in every school team i.e. tennis, netball, was made House Captain and became a prefect in my primary school, Observatory East. I started secondary School at Athlone High School for Girls. We happened to live opposite the boys school and that was a good time for me. I was a very social person and my house was often the hub of our get-togethers.

I was called 'the loafer' - always on the go and very occasionally had to be reigned in much to my distress. I had a gang of girl and boy friends. It was the time of the new Rock and Roll music scene with LP records and transistor radios. Cliff Richard came to Johannesburg and I even screamed with other fans outside his hotel.

When Apartheid became something serious following the Sharpeville massacre in 1960, our parents did not feel happy condoning it, and wanted a better future for us. They made a monumental decision to leave South Africa and come to London where Harry's only brother Michael Katz lived with his family in Hendon. It was a very brave decision to make at that stage in their life to start anew with two teenage daughters.

When we left for England my friends colluded with my mother and arranged a surprise farewell party in my home. My mother took us out for a drive around Johannesburg showing us old familiar places to remember and when we returned there was a full on party to enjoy.

We packed up a life, and as South Africa was exiting the Commonwealth at that time, my father flew alone to the UK to secure our British nationality. We travelled for about a week in a brand new Renault Dauphine down to Cape Town to board The Cape Castle to Southampton. This was a pleasant way to make a new beginning apart from The Bay of Biscay!

My father and his brother Michael were there at the docks to greet us and we watched the car come off this ship with a crane and travelled back to London. Our first impressions were how green and lush everything was. En route we stopped for a pub lunch and that was another very British thing to do. Tennis was on at Wimbledon and the television was another new experience as South Africa had not yet got TV. This summer was very pleasant and we were wonderfully set up from day one by our family just down the road in top a floor attic flat .

New experiences like milk deliveries on the doorstep and having to do our own cleaning, polishing shoes, tidying the bedroom, all of these were rather novel. I took an entrance exam for Hendon County Grammar School and was put down a year as the standard in South Africa was much lower, so that was quite hard to adjust to.

London was at the height of the Swinging 60's and seemed a very exciting place to come to. The reality was very different for a 15-year-old. We had to come to terms with the different climate, new friendships and temporary rented flat in Sunningfields Road in Hendon. It was at this time I started to eat, not do my sporty activities and suddenly for the first time have a weight problem!

My parents started their new business acquiring butcher shops in Willesden, Harlesden and Finchley - a far cry from being a

‘Metzger’ in Germany or South Africa. I admired them very much for making a fresh start at their age in a new country for the second time.

Things were looking up and we found a house in 1964 in Kingsbury - a small ‘dolls’ house ready to move into. We really did not understand the difference between Finchley, Barnet and Kingsbury!

Very sadly after just 10 days in our new home unexpectedly my mother aged 47 died of a massive heart attack. Needless to say this was our most difficult and black period of our lives. I was 17, my sister was just 15 and our dad was in his early 50s. It was a few days before Rosh Hashanah. The funeral took place at Hoop Lane Cemetery and as we were leaving the graveside her brother Walter and another uncle Gigo (formerly Adolf) arrived from South Africa. 24 hours later they returned home for Rosh Hashanah. Life had to continue but with a massive void in our family.

At that point I was due to take French and German at A-level but I asked my Headmaster if I could do it in only one year. He refused but suggested I take Art (which I failed) and Home Economics, which I did. Went on to All Saints Teachers Training College in Tottenham for three years and lived weekdays in digs in Hornsey with a girl who I was teamed up with as we were both Jewish. We were extremely different but it became a lifelong friendship.

At weekends I would return home to be with my father and sister as we managed the household together.. After I went to Israel for my first holiday away in 1965 with a group to kibbutz Machanayim, we both joined Dror, the Jewish youth movement and attended weekends and made new friendships.

In the summer of 1966 I went to America to work as a babysitter for a family in Connecticut for several weeks. At the same time I met my half brother Ronny for the first time and we got to know each other as adults, as he had left aged nine and it was now in his twenties struggling with much anger and resentment to resolve his life growing up with his mother and estrangement from his father.

Socially I was going out to dance clubs and attended Bet Berl in Dollis Hill when I started Israeli dancing which I still do several days a week..

One Saturday night in October I was invited to an engagement party in South London by new friends from Bet Berl and I offered to help out with the food in the afternoon. At the same time a guy was helping with the music and booze. The evening happened and as often was the case nothing amazing emerged from this party.

It was two weeks later when I went to a dance at London University advertised in the JC. I waited outside to meet a friend – all dolled up and made up as I was but she did not show up.

Deciding ‘what the hell’ - I’m going on my own and, lo and behold, one guy recognised me from the party a few weeks earlier. We danced a little and then he introduced me to his friend who was with him. We danced a little and then the three of us went out for a coffee at Kardomah Coffee House on the site of the current UCH hospital in Euston.

That was in October 1966 and the chap who took me home was Steve who lived in South London (and not his friend who lived in Stanmore) and so our friendship and a new chapter in my life began. I completed my last year at college in Halls of Residence. Steve and I would meet up, him crossing from south London in his Black Standard 8 with a ‘quilted dashboard and the revolving ashtray’ which he always believes is what hooked me!

I got to meet the large Noble family who welcomed me very warmly. In June 1967 Steve and I queued up at Rex House on Sunday morning to enlist as volunteers when Israel was facing the threat of invasion by its neighbouring countries. The following day war broke out and beyond all expectation it ended after 6 days. A short while later Steve flew to Israel and I soon followed. We spent our time working on Kibbutz Bet HaEmek. Steve got himself a 'jammy' job working in the garage fixing tractors and loved it there.

I worked sometimes in the orchards and fields starting at 5am or in the kitchens. Our role was mainly supporting the Kibbutz with the men being away in the Army at the frontiers. It was a special time even though we had very basic accommodation we had a good camaraderie and even got to tour around the new territories. We always believed they would negotiate and be returned for a peace deal. However the Golan Heights and Jerusalem was always another story!

I returned in the Autumn to complete my Teachers Training at All Saints College in Tottenham doing Home Economics. It was during this period we wrote letters and we realised that we were in love!

We got engaged in May 1968 and married in the summer of 1969. After a traditional Wedding in Great Portland Street Synagogue followed by a lunch and Tea Dance at Wandsworth Town Hall. We drove off into the sunset to Oxford en route to our honeymoon in The Lake District.

**JOAN AND STEVE
WEDDING 1969**



Life started in a small flat in Sudbury Town before we moved to our first house Norval Road, backing on to Northwick Park. I worked at Heriots Wood Grammar School in Stanmore as a Home Economics teacher for 3 years.

Our first son Paul was born in October 1972 and two years later in May 1975 our son David arrived. We were involved in the fledgling Wembley Reform Synagogue, meeting in peoples homes and the local church. We then lived for 26 years in Bouverie Gardens, Kenton .

I was baking birthday cakes as a cottage industry and that led me into a totally new career with Gluten Free foods. It started with a few hours a week and developed over 15 years. Giving demonstrations across the country, building a new bakery to make gluten free bread and cakes, then heading Research and Development and travelling abroad for new products.

These were very exciting times meeting Coeliac adults and children and others with dietary conditions. We produced and photographed dishes for a regular magazine, for a recipe book I wrote, and I also made a video. I became a Director in the company and eventually took redundancy when we were bought out and they relocated to Wiltshire.



**JOAN DEMONSTRATING
GLUTEN FREE PRODUCTS**

We moved to Stanmore in 2003 to enjoy a dream home in the woods. I went to work part time at the Holocaust Survivor Centre in Hendon arranging activities and programmes for the members. It was a privilege to arrange for their testimonies to be taken, and for me to even take a group of them to Lille and Paris on my own!

A special experience that has kept me in touch as a volunteer at the Centre. It also led me to being involved with Holocaust Memorial Day School visits and to look at my own family history actually through artwork and training for Generation2Generation presentations. It seems clear to me on reflection that I have involved myself in these aspects of Holocaust memory as a torch I feel obligated to hold up. It's part of my being, and expressed through my art and actions.

For a period of 3 years I was employed by JMI Jewish Music Institute. I have absolutely no musicality but a real problem throughout my life -has always been not being able to say 'no'. My first challenge was to organise over 6 months 'A Day of Jewish Music' on a single Sunday at The Millenium Dome in 2000. We had several Performance Stages offering many acts from choirs as far as Cardiff to Jewish Lads Brigade, Klezmer musicians, etc. JMI then received a £250,000 grant to facilitate 60 projects, which we offered to individuals to explore aspects of Jewish Music. People learned new skills, put on concerts, wrote books all designed for communal benefit. We had a selection panel and I monitored the projects and the finances which always amused me as my one weakness is maths and finances. Fortunately someone else was responsible for this. Rather like the Directors meeting I used to sit in without a clue about the figures... but fortunately my other talents were appreciated.

I started to attend Adult Education Art classes and workshops over the years since retirement and now have a great studio at home where I do Mixed Media and textile work. That is despite a dreadful art teacher that resulted in me failing A level Art!

I have had several exhibitions over the years. My first was a single day to exhibit work in 3 rooms at Ben Uri Gallery. I started to believe that I could call myself an Artist when people bought my art. At 70 my second Solo show "Out of the Shadows" addressed migration and identity. My next solo show is planned for November 2020 in the hometown of my mother and my grandparents in Germany. Reconnecting with the past heritage and with young German students is a positive force.

We have been very proud of our sons, now grown up and married, following their dream careers and for giving us three wonderful grandsons and so much joy.

Having gained a First Class Honours Degree, Paul started his career with the BBC and has ventured into exciting music and entertainment businesses, Spiritland in King's Cross and at the South Bank and other hospitality venues.

**PAUL EMMA
AND ZIGGY**



David is a musician and works as a Music Therapist in Oxford. We are so proud of them, our daughters in law and our grandchildren in the way they are growing up. It is our greatest pleasure.

**DAVID SOPHIE LEO
AND JOSEPH**



Days are very easily filled with hobbies, Hebrew Classes, Israeli dancing, being involved in our Mosaic Synagogue and being active grandparents. We are fortunate to have good health to enjoy travel and a wide circle of family and friends.

Now in our golden years ...Life is precious and not taken for granted and never more so now during Covid 19 lockdown when we really count our blessings.

.....and the overlapping story from sister Mari follows





My Story

by

Mari B



My family history and early life are of course run in parallel to Joan's so I offer some different views from my position in the family, two and a half years younger. Our early life in South Africa was very happy, carefree and privileged. As part of the Jewish Community we went to Hebrew School every day except Wednesdays, when we were given permission to go to Ballet in Hillbrow, a district in Johannesburg, with the formidable Miss Orlandini.

I was different to Joan in that I was not at all sporty and was quite content playing in the garden with dolls, my tea set, friends and any kittens or any babies I could find. I was known as 'Scaredy Cat' while Joan was 'The Roamer'. I wanted to be a teacher, a famous ballerina or actress, with a husband and with babies.



**Family Katz South
Africa. Marion
Liesel, Joan and
Harry**

We attended the local Primary School but mainly socialised with Jewish children. There were some children from the local orphanage, known as 'The Home Children', who were not allowed to mix with us out of school. We had an Afrikaans friend, Michelle Barnes whom I idolised. She lived in a big house with a swimming pool and had older brothers, a life-sized walky-talky doll and three huge Teddy Bears. One day after a swim we were drinking orange juice in the shade when she told me the story of Baby Jesus, followed by the Easter story and the horrific news that we had crucified him. I was so upset, and asked my mother how we/she/the Jewish people could have put nails in poor Jesus's hands and hung him on a cross? That was the first time I remember her emotionally telling me that my Grandparents had been killed. We were always aware of something, a sadness when they read previous letters from their parents and talked in German about family. When I was older, my mother must have encouraged me and I read widely about the Holocaust, Anne Frank, Leon Uris and others.

An important experience in my early life was when we travelled as a family to Europe in 1956 for three months to visit the extended family who had survived the war.

***Marion and
Liesel
arriving in
Dusseldorf in
1956***



Joan arriving



It was always important for my parents to visit the cemetery but we children had to wait in the car. I turned seven in London and still have such very clear memories of the whole trip. It was unusual for people to fly (by Comet) at that time, very glamorous and special. We had new outfits made just for the journey and were so welcomed by the family, first in Germany, then London and Israel. We were looked after and thoroughly spoiled for three weeks by family in Germany, while my parents had a bit of a holiday in Paris and Switzerland. When they left us, we, then six and nine, did not speak any German and the family spoke only German. When we met my parents again in Rome, to my Mother's dismay, we had become so used to speaking German, we found it hard to speak English.

Mary Maseng circa 1956



In South Africa, we were also brought up by 'our Mary', our African nanny who had two children, of similar ages to us. They lived in Kimberley approximately three hundred miles from Johannesburg as they were not allowed to live in the city after the age of three. I remember when they once visited and watched their mother push us on the swing in the park which they were forbidden to enter. This felt very wrong and I still have the image of them looking through the fence. There would have been a 'Europeans Only' sign in the park as there were on the benches, beaches, toilets and many public places.

One Monday I heard Mary crying while she was doing the washing. Tragically, Mary's daughter Anna died of TB. I remember when Mary visited her home, she departed with cardigans, warm clothes and new shoes etc but came back with virtually nothing. She said she had to leave them, presumably because they had so very little.

She lived in her room in the back garden, cooked, cleaned, and loved and protected us until we left South Africa. If there was a raid by police at night, looking to arrest unauthorised people - those without the Pass giving permission to be in the city or they could be arrested. My father would remain in the back yard until they left, to protect Mary from any brutality, which was a regular occurrence. He also went to the Police station immediately when any of his 'native boys', actually men who worked for him, did not come to work. If he did not vouch for them they were arrested and sent to labour farms and often disappeared???. Mary told us "if you prick my finger, the blood is red, if you prick your finger, the blood is the same". My parents taught us to treat Africans with respect, contrary to many white South Africans, past and sadly still currently. We had 'Race Studies' in the School curriculum where we were taught that Black people were inferior to whites. The text was "God created Man and he was White".

After South Africa voted to leave The Commonwealth to become a Republic I was chosen to be in a very big display at a large stadium celebrating the occasion. I was so thrilled to be a part of it with hundreds of other children in rows with sticks, ribbons and rousing music. We also learned the new National Anthem, Die Stem, in Afrikaans. Of course I practiced at home and my mother came to the display. She was less than enthusiastic and only later told us about her fear that "my children are being turned into Hitler Youth".

The rise of Apartheid and racism in South Africa had echos for my parents of their experiences in Nazi Germany, resulting in the murder of their parents and extended family who left it too late to leave. After the Sharpeville Shootings we looked at the world map and planned to emigrate.

When we arrived in London in 1962 after an emotional farewell to South Africa and our close family, at twelve years old, I was expecting to see Cliff Richard around every corner and live near Buckingham Palace. The reality was quite different. At first I didn't know that Cockney was English and people couldn't understand my South African accent. We lived in a small flat in Hendon and had never previously made our own beds, nor been in such close contact with one another. We had 'Free Mandela' posters on our bedroom wall and went on Anti-Apartheid marches.



***Anti Apartheid Rally
Trafalgar Square
circa 1963***

The rental period for the flat, originally for two months, was extended to two years. It must have been very hard for my parents coping with teenagers and a new life with restricted funds. Their money was frozen in South Africa. £5,000 was the maximum allowance on emigration.

My father, who had owned three shops with staff, had a poorly paid job gutting chickens all day in the basement of Harris Butchers in Hampstead. He brought home the giblets and my mother was most inventive with her recipes. To this day, I can't eat offal!

We knew nothing about the different school system in England. I had attended secondary school for one term in South Africa which had decimalised, studied French for one term, so when I took the 13+ exam, I failed the French and Maths. While Joan went to Hendon County Grammar, I travelled to Woodcroft Secondary Modern School for girls in Burnt Oak. My peers were unused to foreigners and couldn't understand why, coming from Africa, I was not black. They thought we lived in mud huts and had lions in the garden. I changed my accent in the first week and was appalled that friends only had tea when they went home and that we were to cook 'Toads', aka Toad in the Hole in Domestic Science, not to mention mince with raisins and sugar, aka Mincemeat! It was terribly scary coming home on my own in the dark. In South Africa when it rained, our nannies used to line up outside school with umbrellas to walk us home if parents weren't collecting.

The winter of 1962 was notoriously cold. My mother hung blankets at the windows. I got lost in the smog, wearing only my school blazer when London came to a standstill. School was closed for awhile due to frozen outside toilets, so I was alone at home, without friends and just enjoyed learning independently. A bit like the Covid19 lockdown. I came first in all subjects, subsequently my mother and headmistress were discussing me moving to Grammar School.



Mari & Liesel in Kingsbury 1964



**(L-R) Marion,, Mother Liesel and her brother
Walter, Joan in Hendon 1964**

My mother died suddenly on the 2nd September 1964, 10 days after we moved house to Kingsbury. A kind friend of the family attended an interview with me at Kingsbury County Grammar School but we were told that I needed at least five O-Levels. Impossible since I had just turned 15. The truant officer called and so I attended Claremont Secondary Modern for two years.

We were in such a state of confusion, grief and loss and life changed completely again. It wasn't an easy time and there was no such thing as bereavement counselling. In hindsight, the person we spoke to about our grief was the dentist. My father was bereft and worked hard in his butcher shops but home, children and schooling had been my mother's role.

Alongside going to school Joan and I kept house and supported my father. I finally attended Kingsbury County Grammar School for my A Levels. My chosen school project was a book about racism. I am so grateful that my life experience and education was not just confined to South Africa and am very grateful to my parents for enabling that opportunity.

I was prepared for my Batmitzvah before we left S.A which was cancelled, then again in England the same happened.

Joan went to Israel with a Zionist Youth Movement called Dror in 1963, After attending their reunion my social, Zionist and Jewish life commenced. My friends and I volunteered to go to Israel in 1967 while I was still in the lower sixth form. We enjoyed an enlightening, eventful, interesting time, travelling around the country including the new territories. We picked pears on Kibbutz Hakuk and my boyfriend had a stint in the Israeli army, driving a Russian Half Track – a Nagmash, in the Golan.

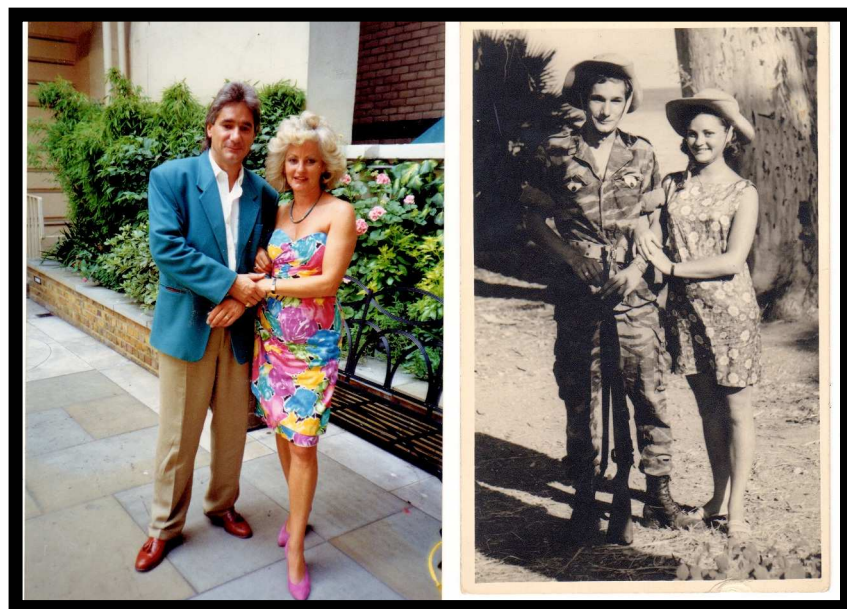


Photo 8 .Volunteering during the 6 Day War 1967. Enjoying a break at the Kinneret and at a Reunion in London 25 years later 1992.

Zionism has always been our 'default', probably because of my mother. In fact Israel was one of the options for Emigration when we left SA but my parents were looking for less likelihood of conflict in their new country. My father's only brother was also living in London

The Youth Movement encouraged us to make Aliyah and live on a Kibbutz, which I intended to do but I felt I would

have more to offer after taking my place in Teacher Training College in Manchester. Having always wanted to teach and I decided that was the best option. My regret now is never even applying to University. There was little Career guidance, especially at Secondary Modern School. Girls were expected to learn shorthand and typing and weren't even taught physics or chemistry. I was thrown out of the Maths O-Level class when I said I couldn't understand that $A+B=C$. I still don't. I was fine with that and studied Arithmetic CSE instead. Computer programming was mentioned as an option if you were good at Maths. It also suited me to get myself exempted from games so I could keep house and study. My Dad was not involved at all.

So unlike Joan, who came home from college every weekend to keep house, I went off to college in Didsbury Manchester, studying for a 4 year B. ED course and expected the world to open for me. My first year was in grim digs in Stockport in a house with 20 girls, no men allowed near after which I lived in Halls of Residence. It wasn't a terribly happy time although I learned a lot about life and made some good friends. Having acquired a love of travel since I was six, without the funds to travel, I utilized my languages, mostly French and German to do so. I got holiday jobs as a courier shepherding American High School kids around Europe by train. It was exhausting but character building, enlightening and eventful. I also worked as a Ski and Summer Representative for a Holiday Company.

Always wanting to go back to South Africa, I saved every penny earned from babysitting, birthdays and temping work, amounting to the £300 fare required to fly to South Africa. Subsequently £300 was my freedom money saved and kept in an account until my marriage. I stayed for about 3 months with my wonderful family in their beautiful home, celebrating my 21st Birthday. It was a fabulous home-coming, apart from Apartheid. I worked in my aunt's dress shop Millews Fashions and spent all my earnings on clothes. I also thought that I had fallen in love, at one point intending to remain. Instead I decided to return to rainy Manchester, shortened my course from Bachelor of Education to Certificate which meant I could finish a year earlier, return to South Africa and maybe teach in a township. My nanny Mary was not to be found in South Africa. In fact I never went back for 32 years. I often thought about living in South Africa again, especially with the beautiful climate but gradually realised that I was more English than South African. The issue of Racial injustice was always a concern.

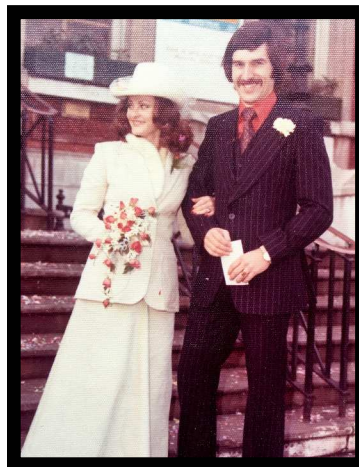
After qualifying I returned to London to begin teaching Infants in Mill Hill, sharing a flat in Finchley with two other friends from college. After three years sharing with different girls, I rented a single bedsit. One night my friend persuaded me to go to a party at her cousin's flat in Sheila House in Golders Green. I had always dated Jewish men as that was expected. Well, that January night I met a tall, dark, handsome non-Jewish Yorkshireman named Peter Bruce who swept me off my feet. Things happened very quickly with a camping holiday and romantic proposal on a beach in St Tropez in August 1974.

***Celebrating
engagement! in St
Tropez 2nd August
1974***



We were married in Hampstead Registry Office 4th January 1975, went skiing in Brandt Austria for our Honeymoon, returning to our new home in Wembley.

***Pete and Mari's
Wedding Hampstead
Registry Office
4/1/1975***



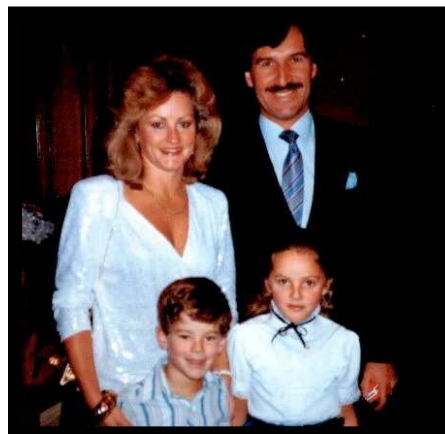
Our different Religions just didn't matter anymore, to me, and thankfully also to my family.



***Family L-R, Best man Tony,
Steve, Joan, Miriam, Harry,
Marion, Pete, Hilda, & Bob
Bruce, Paul Noble aged 2,
Vivian(step-sister) and Ronny
Katz, (half brother)***

Pete changed his career from being a Civil Engineer to Computer Sales with IBM and I continued teaching. My hobby, attending yoga classes because I didn't have to hit or catch a ball or compete with others, has developed and I have practiced and benefited from yoga for 41 years. I trained as a Yoga teacher and am still enjoying it. To me it is a way of life that sustains me and I learn every day. We built up a great life, had our beautiful daughter Sula in 1977, moved to Welwyn in 1978 and then completed our family with our son Tony in 1979.

***The Bruces 1988
Mari, Pete ,Tony &
Sula***



We worked very hard to create our home, family and lifestyle, enjoying holidays all over the world and had a really wonderful life.

**2008 Pete, Mari
Tony & Sula.**



We created a lovely home which I am still appreciating today, after 42 years. My home has always been very important to me. In the light of my extended family, parents, and grandparents losing their homes, fortunes and in some cases their lives, I was very much afraid of losing mine. At 21, desperate to visit the home I grew up in from age one to twelve, my aunt reminded me that the family of four I was seeking in South Africa was no longer there. Whilst I was in South Africa my Father moved in with his new partner and rented out our home. My possessions were boxed for me to dispose of. That was tough for me. My sister Joan was by now married to Steve. I was very upset on my return to England that my home in Kingsbury was rented out.

I have always been aware, presumably from family history of the Holocaust, that nothing can be taken for granted and of course that things can change, which they did in 2004 when Pete and I separated.. He was a lovely man who never meant to harm anyone. We got married on his birthday so he wouldn't forget his anniversary but he forgot that he was married. We had a few difficult years, supported by my family and although we eventually divorced in 2010, Pete and I reconciled and I forgave him. Sadly he died suddenly in February 2013.

After thirty years of marriage, during eight years as a single lady, I experienced some anxious, sad, funny, and interesting times of change, involving work, personal development, travel and friendships. The amazing support from my family and friends, even by Pete in his way, helped me become stronger.

Just when my life was fine, when I was least expecting it, life changed again.

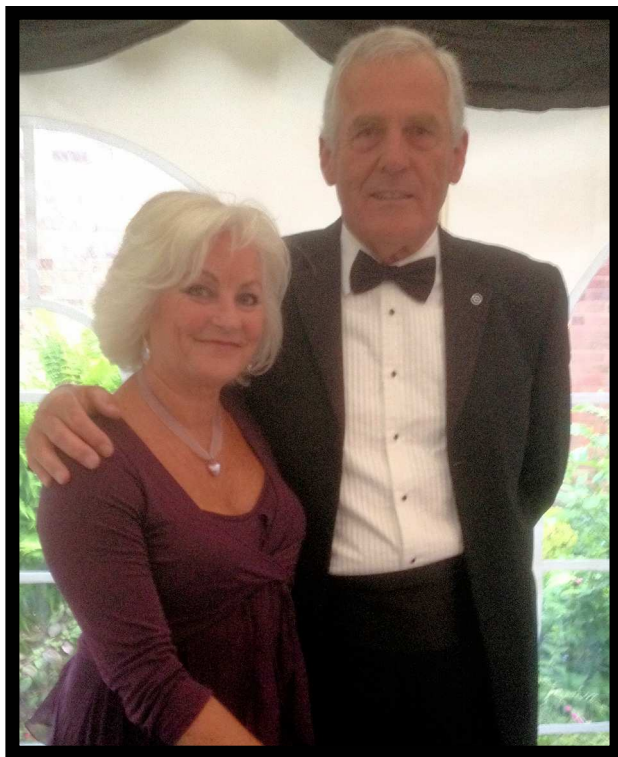
One cold February night in 2012 I went to the pictures. My friend cancelled and I plucked up the courage to go by myself. Sitting apart from everyone, not wishing to be seen, exuding a "leave me alone" vibe, a gentleman asked if he could have his coffee at one of the four sofas I was occupying.

Following a short chat I established that he was named Robin, from Harpenden, widowed and his business was in manufacturing gloves. The film (The Iron Lady) started, and we took our separate numbered seats.

I wanted to do something as he seemed a decent person, a mensch, and I had met some funny bunnies. I felt sympathy for him and looking at him a few rows in front of me, had a strong desire to massage his shoulders!

I loitered a bit after the film and while leaving in my blue Mini saw him and we waved. I regretted not doing anything, but what to do? Eventually, uncharacteristically and with some encouragement, I Googled his details, found a number and after some days called. It transpired that he too, out of character, bought some Post-It's the next day, drove around Welwyn and left a message on another blue Mini. He had a text relationship with a 22 year old hairdresser for a few days before realising this was not me.

We met for a coffee and took it very slowly and are now living happily together and making the best of life, laughing, travelling when we can and counting our blessings. Once again my family has accepted him with open arms.



Plus One Robin

I seem to have whizzed through those special years of marriage and family but they were all I ever wanted with wonderful and challenging times. I have been especially blessed with two amazing children, romance, excitement and love. My journey of personal development includes courses with the Outlook Organisation where I have learned a lot and am still growing. I have learned that my happiness and security come from within and that it's always a work in progress.

Without being very involved in organised religion I am very proud of my Jewish heritage, culture and history, including direct family history. My children are also actively aware and involved. We have recently found out much more about the family history. A fascinating book has been published in Germany detailing my father's family, and research has also been carried out concerning my mother's family, both by very dedicated German Christian men. We have a translation of the diary my mother started on her sixteenth birthday in 1933. A gift which enables us to know my mother better, since we lost her so young. It is very interesting and revealing of the times ahead.

Despite my sister Joan reportedly saying " I don't want a sister I want a baby" when I was born, she is the one constant who has shared this life with me, in parallel, supporting me in her very special way and for that I am extremely lucky and grateful.

Joan, my children and I are currently preparing a presentation with the support of 'Generation2Generation' to talk about some of the family history, starting with my mother's diary. I am committed to telling the story of my family particularly concerning The Holocaust.

My legacy is my gratitude for everything that I have, for Life. Although I am influenced by the past, I try to live in the moment. I have always been aware that every material thing we have can be lost, even our lives. I am passionate to eradicate injustice and racism in all forms.

Never again.



*Sisters Joan and
Marion, Then and Now
2008*



***Wild Woodbine A native version
of the garden honeysuckle***

My Story
by
Yanke F

2nd Generation Holocaust Survivor, 3rd Generation Wandering Jew

Yanky Fachler

"If you do not know where you come from, then you don't know where you are, and if you don't know where you are, then you don't know where you're going. And if you don't know where you're going, you're probably going wrong."

Terry Pratchett

"Home is that place when you can recognise yourself in the people passing in the street."

Louis Lentin

I was born soon after WW2 in Britain to parents who had escaped as teenagers from Nazi Germany just before the war. In fact, neither of them was a German Jew. My mother was half Litvak and half Galicianer, and my father was a Pollak.

Through a quirk of history, and despite never having been to South Africa or Britain in his life, my maternal grandfather had a South African passport. He had the foresight to register the births of his two daughters in the British consulate in Hamburg. When times got tough in Frankfurt, he was able to do something that too few German Jews were able to do – to freely leave Nazi Germany and go to the destination of his choice – Britain. 1938, just a few months before Kristallnacht, he and his family reached the safety of London. 99% of my mother's family escaped the Holocaust.

My father and his sister were lucky enough to be sponsored by Youth Aliya as part of the Kindertransport programme which would eventually bring some 10,000 Jewish children from Nazi-occupied Europe to Britain between Kristallnacht and the outbreak of WW2. My father arrived at London's Liverpool Street Station with a bunch of his school friends in May 1939, and was sent to a farm school on the estate of Lord Balfour in Scotland. For an ardent Zionist like my father, it was very meaningful to be in the same building where Balfour had penned the famous Balfour Declaration 22 years earlier. Like most of the Kindertransport children, my father was destined never to see his parents again. To this day, I do not know how long they survived in the Lodz Ghetto after they sent their last Red Cross telegram to my father in the summer of 1942.

In the book I edited about my parents' escapades, *The Vow*,



***Front cover of The Vow –
Rebuilding the Fachler Tribe
after the Holocaust, 2003]***

they each describe separately the incredible feeling of exhilaration and relief that swept over them as they crossed from captivity to freedom, as they crossed the border by train from Germany to Holland on their way to catch the ferry to Harwich and on to Liverpool Street Station.

In London, my teenage mother helped Rabbi Dr Solomon Schonfeld look after refugee children. She quickly learned English, and got an office job in the Houndsditch Warehouse before becoming a secretary in the office, a religious Zionist organisation. My mother, her parents and her younger sister eventually moved to Letchworth Garden City in 1942. Over 500 Jewish families had settled in Letchworth to avoid the Blitz. They probably stood out less than in other towns. Letchworth's founding citizens were often caricatured by outsiders as idealistic and otherworldly. John Betjeman painted them as earnest health freaks. Day-trippers visited the town to ogle at the cranks: a teetotal pub, socialists, vegetarians, barefoot suffragettes, and even cohabiters. George Orwell, who lived nearby, said that Letchworth attracted "every fruit juice drinker, nudist, sandal wearer, sex-maniac, Quaker, nature cure quack, pacifist and feminist in England". Not that I ever met anyone like that growing up in Letchworth.

When my mother was called up to do national service, she chose to be a Land Girl, and joined a tiny Bachad kibbutz in Hardmead, Buckinghamshire, where she met my father. She loved kibbutz life, and when she was in her nineties, I was still telling her that at heart she had remained a kibbutznikit. My father joined the British Army in the middle of the war, having point-blank refused to join the anti-Semitic Polish Army in Exile. My parents were married in December 1944 on their kibbutz.



***Chuppah of
Eli and Chava
Fachler,
Buckingham,
December
1944***



When I was born on 14 January 1946, the first grandchild on both sides, my father was still in the army. Hitler made sure that I never got to meet my paternal grandparents. My maternal grandmother died on my first birthday, so the only grandparent I knew was my maternal grandfather, who died when I was nine. To all intents and purposes, I grew up grandparentless – which probably explains why I always craved the company of people much older than me.

I was the oldest of seven children, and my mother also managed to find the time and the energy to foster another child. The day I was born, 14 January 1946, my grandfather came to visit my mother in hospital. He was carrying a copy of the Evening Standard, with the headline “Chief Rabbi, Dr. J.H. Hertz, dead.” My grandfather said to my mother: “One Chief Rabbi dies, another one is born!”

Even before I started school, I attended the nearby synagogue – really, it was a stiebel –every day. I learned to read Hebrew at the age of four. When I started infants’ school in 1951, my mother took me along on my first morning. I stood there, surrounded by lots of kids and mothers milling around. Something puzzled me. Some of the children were crying. Before I shooed mum back home, I asked her: “Why are they crying?” “Because they don’t want to go to school,” she answered. But her answer only perplexed me more. How could any child not want to start the big adventure that was school? My mother had primed me well. She had made school sound like a prize for grown-up children.

My parents taught me to respect the police. One day, when I was 5, I found a one penny coin in the street. I marched into the police station and handed the penny to the policeman behind the counter. Looking back, I can’t quite believe how he kept a straight face, but he duly recorded the incident in his ledger. “We will keep this penny for three months,” he told me. “If no one comes in to claim it, we will let you know and you can keep it.” Three months later, I received a post-card from the police, advising me that I could collect the penny. Which I diligently did.

I wore my school cap at school, and a yarmulke at home. One day, on my own initiative, I asked the headmaster whether I could wear my yarmulke at school. Of course, he replied, just bring a note from your parents. My astonished parents probably thought that as Jews, we should keep our heads down and not make a fuss. Nevertheless, they gave their written permission. My action set a precedent. For the next 20 years, any Jewish boy could wear a yarmulke in any school in Letchworth.

One Sunday afternoon, when I was about 8, I was on my way to visit a friend. My route took me past the back garden of my headmaster, who was leaning on his back gate: “Jacob,” he said, “I’ve been meaning to ask you: Do you know what happened to the original Five Books of Moses?” On the face of it, a perfectly reasonable question, but because I had never heard the Torah referred to as “the Five Books of Moses,” I hadn’t the foggiest idea what he was talking about. Not wishing to display my ignorance, I relied on my literal interpretation of his question. “Sir,” I replied, “we’ve got three of them in our synagogue, but I don’t know what happened to the other two.” I was of course referring to Torah scrolls, of which there are tens of thousands throughout the world.

Although I was raised in a household where both my parents were not native English speakers, and although all their friends were from the Continent, I was not particularly conscious of the Holocaust. It’s not that this was a taboo subject at home, but like so many of their generation, my parents did not speak much about it. I wasn’t

alone in not knowing much about the Holocaust – in the 1950s and 1960s, the Holocaust was not yet mainstream. I had caught snatched references to Hitler and the Nazis, of course. But as a child, I was really only familiar with Kristallnacht that my father witnessed first-hand in 1938, and the Kindertransport programme which brought him from Berlin to the safety of Britain in 1939. I had only a hazy idea of the concentration camps and the death camps, and I'm not even sure I had ever heard of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. I knew that my grandparents had died in the Holocaust, but I was pretty ignorant of the details, or the impact, or the implications. I did not even realise that dozens of members of my father's family had perished. It would take several decades before I started immersing myself in Holocaust literature, writing about the Holocaust and speaking on the Holocaust.

Psychologists have identified the extent to which the so-called Second Generation – people like myself who are the children of Holocaust survivors - carry with us the trauma of the Shoah. This phenomenon has received further scientific validation from epigenetic scientists, who tell us that we are born with physical scars from traumatic events that our parents endured before we were even conceived. In other words, trauma is transmitted inter-generationally. Experiments demonstrate how epigenetic changes in our parents' genes came to us through biological information passed down genetically. So the traumatic experiences that my father lived through, such as Kristallnacht, are more than just a legacy. They are a physical presence in my body, living on through me and through the genetic inheritance I pass on to later generations. I have literally inherited the Holocaust.

One consequence of being surrounded by non-native English speakers in my formative first five years is that although I am English born and bred, my spoken English is (still) a little bit odd. It has an indefinable quality about it. I wouldn't exactly call it an accent, but I seem to have internalised some twangs that to this day confound many people when they try to work out where I'm from. South Africa? Sweden?

In my childhood, WW2 was a far more important theme for me than the Holocaust. I was convinced that Britain had won the war single-handedly, maybe with a bit of help from the Americans and Russians. My hero was Winston Churchill. I proudly watched patriotic WW2 movies like *The Dam Busters* (1955), *Reach for the Sky* (1956), and *Bridge over the River Kwai* (1962).

My father had thoroughly enjoyed his adventurous two years at his Scottish boarding school, believing that boarding school gives you backbone and is an excellent preparation for life. In an attempt to replicate his experience, he sent all his boys to boarding school, starting with me. I achieved a scholarship to Carmel College when I was 11, and stayed there seven years. Unlike many people I know – including my younger brothers - I thoroughly enjoyed every minute of my boarding school experience.

Three specific things at Carmel made me become more aware of the Holocaust. One was reading *Exodus* by Leon Uris, which also had the effect of turning me into a Zionist. Another was a teacher who would have seemed to me as quite exotic. In my sheltered life in Letchworth, I had never met a Catholic priest, and I had never met a convert to Judaism. Abraham Carmel was both – an ordained Catholic priest – Father Kenneth Cox - who became a Jew. When Pope Pius XII died in October 1958, I was ignorant about the controversy surrounding Pius' role during the war. I did not know that as Cardinal Pacelli, Pius had concluded the infamous Concordat with the Nazis in 1933. I did not know that Italian Jews had been marched off to the death camps under Pius' Vatican window. The first inkling I had of the controversy was when Mr Carmel got

up at the weekly assembly at Carmel and gave an impassioned defence of Pius' role during the Holocaust. This incident certainly kindled my interest.

My third Carmel-related anecdote is about another teacher, Yisrael Alexander. He was from Berlin, and after Kristallnacht he was sent to Dachau concentration camp for four weeks. I mention this because one day in class, someone asked to go to the loo. "It can't wait," said the boy. Yisrael gave him a piercing look, and then said: "Don't talk to me about not being able to wait. Do you know what it's like to stand for several hours at a time on parade in a concentration camp, not being allowed to pee? Believe me, you can wait." This chilling throw-away remark made a deep impression on me. Although in later life, I would meet many concentration camp survivors, this was the very first time I had heard a first-hand account.

The more I delve into Jewish history, the angrier I am at the thousands of years of consistent and persistent persecution. As the Hagadah says, "In every generation they have risen to destroy us." My actual first encounter with the Holocaust came in 1986 when I found myself on a good-will visit to Austria sponsored by the Israel-Austria Friendship League. Our itinerary included Mauthausen – my first-ever visit to a concentration camp. Although I did think of taking with me a prayer book in order to say kaddish, I was totally unprepared for the emotional impact Mauthausen had on me. As I entered the camp under the Nazi eagle, I was immobilised with grief. I sobbed and sobbed. I had a vision of my grandparents walking under a similar arch towards their death. Suddenly, the tragedy was personal. That day at the site, I managed to compose myself sufficiently to lead the kaddish and El Male Rachamim memorial prayer as we stood round the Jewish memorial. I was never the same after Mauthausen, and my visit there had a stronger impact on me than subsequent visits to Auschwitz and Teresin. All my later Holocaust-related activities can be linked to that visit.

When I came to live in Ireland, I experienced a total Holocaust immersion when I was invited to join an ad hoc committee of Jews and non-Jews who were planning to commemorate Ireland's first Holocaust Memorial Day. Ireland had signed the 2000 Stockholm Declaration, which committed European countries to preserve the memory of those murdered in the Holocaust. 27 January, the date when the Red Army liberated Auschwitz in 1945, would become Holocaust Memorial Day.

At the inaugural meeting of the Ireland committee in the Israeli embassy, I realised that the well-meaning people around the table had no real notion of the shape or content of a memorial event. I circulated a proposed format for the event, and this format has remained the blueprint ever since. I wrote to my son at the time: "It's as if the Shoa has caught up with me. I feel now that I have a much better connection to my two grandparents who were murdered. I am angry and sad that no one knows when they died, where they died, or how they did. Was it in the Lodz ghetto? Was it on a transport? Was it in a concentration camp? The lack of closure disturbs me more today than at any other time in my life."

In January 2003, and for the following 12 years, I emceed HMD in Dublin in the presence of presidents, prime ministers, cabinet ministers, ambassadors, rabbis, and other VIPs. What was remarkable about the inaugural HMD was that Ireland's Minister for Justice apologised on behalf of the Irish state for "commissions and omissions" of the Irish government in its treatment of Jews seeking refuge in Ireland before WW2.

When I started sharing my Holocaust-related activities with my father, he started opening up more and more, culminating in two occasions when I accompanied him on when he visited his native Berlin. In 2011, a yeshiva

established in the same building where he had lived on Brunnenstrasse before he fled Germany, invited him to visit. It was incredible seeing him being called to the Torah in the newly restored synagogue where he had celebrated his barmitzvah just two years before Kristallnacht. In 2013, he was the guest speaker in this same Berlin synagogue to mark the 75th anniversary of Kristallnacht. He held an audience of several hundred dignitaries spellbound. Ronald Lauder, chairman of the World Jewish Congress, described the scene:

“On Sunday, a Kristallnacht memorial was held at Beth Zion Synagogue in Brunnenstraße. This shul, which had been built in 1910, was one of the 1,000 Jewish places of worship that were destroyed on 9 November 1938 by Nazi-orchestrated mobs. Most moving was when Eli Fachler, 90, told us what he saw as a 15-year-old. In Berlin, Eli Fachler was there to tell us about that event. But he did not come alone: Many members of his family came as well. And to see them sit there and sing together was deeply moving and uplifting. The Nazis did not succeed to eliminate Jewish life.”

My father’s mesmerising address (in German) was a masterclass in oratory. He recounted how the most frightening moment of his life was on Kristallnacht when a drunken Nazi shouted up into the stairwell of the apartment block: “Are there any more Jews alive up there?” My father passed away two years later, and my son spoke at the shloshim – the thirtieth day of mourning. He told the story that father had told in Berlin, and ended his words with: “Yes, there are still Jews alive up here.”

Before I came to Berlin, my father had asked me to bring from Ireland the shofar – ram’s horn – that had belonged to his uncle who had been the warden of the Beth Zion synagogue. In the middle of his address, my father recited the Shehecheyanu prayer (Blessed are You Lord our God, Ruler of the Universe who has given us life, sustained us, and allowed us to reach this day), and one of my nephews gave a piercing blast of the shofar. The hairs stood up on the back of the neck of everyone present.

I can’t help wondering what must have passed through my grandparents’ minds during their last seconds on earth. They were obviously relieved that their two children were safe in Britain. I only wish that they could have known how much they are remembered and celebrated and mourned by the next generations.

Two of my father’s second cousins survived the camps, but made the fatal error of returning to Poland after their release from the Displaced Persons camps. They went home to Kielce. In July 1946, 15 months after the end of WW2 and the Holocaust, they were murdered in cold blood together with 40 other Jews - by Poles, not by Germans. Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Shamir once said: “The Poles imbibed anti-Semitism with their mothers’ milk.” Unlike the Germans who had to be taught that the Jews were unter-menschen, the Poles didn’t need to be taught.

During my primary school days, beyond the occasional “Jacky Jew-boy,” I never experienced any anti-Semitism. My seven years in a Jewish boarding school maybe shielded me from antisemitic remarks, and my five years at Brunel University in the tolerant sixties and early seventies likewise spared me any direct experience of anti-Semitism. But I never forgot the story that my headmaster David Stamler told us. He was evacuated from London as a child when WW2 broke out, and sent to a non-Jewish family. As he stood on the doorstep, the woman of the house tousled his hair – to look for his horns!

I acknowledge that I was always conscious of being “the other.” This feeling was captured very well by my late

friend, the film producer Louis Lentin. Talking about his experience of being a Jew born in Ireland, he told the story of working on the production of a new Irish Civil War play. A senior colleague turned to him and said bluntly: "How can you possibly understand ... You're not Irish, you're Jewish." This was not the anti-Semitic ranting of an uneducated lout. This was a professional colleague and friend, questioning how Louis could comprehend things Irish when he could never be a member of the parish. This incident forced Louis to ask new questions about his own identity. Could he indeed be accepted as Irish and yet not be of Ireland? Was he the proverbial hyphenated Irish-Jew? Anonymous anti-Semitic letters and phone calls that he had received in the past suddenly came back in sharper focus.

Almost forty years after his colleague's comment, Louis wrote in 2005:

"Being Jewish is central to my existence. I am a Jew and it has never occurred to me that I could be anything else. That being so, can I also truly be of Ireland? ...Home is that place when you can recognise yourself in the people passing in the street.I live amongst the passing faces of Dublin, but I cannot say I truly recognise them. Or am I amongst those who unknowingly carry a genetically embodied sense of exile? All I can offer up, even at my advancing years, is a mostly un-admitted commonality with many Irish Jews, that no matter how long we stay, no matter what we contribute, 'Ireland of the Welcomes' is but a "Resting Place", a night shelter for the eternal homeless.

"So, is it my lot, indeed that of many Jews, to remain the inside-outsider, existing under a slightly cracked glass ceiling? The exotic other, conscious of a sense of being an irritation, tolerated but not truly understood. Not entirely "of". Over the years Irish Jewry has contributed strongly to the arts, professions, politics, you name it. But for many, a feeling exists that our success is viewed by some Irish as an 'interference' in "their affairs", "their country". Both my children and many of their friends realised this many years ago. They have left, never to return.

"During the Nazi era, out of 1,500 or so applications for visas, the Irish Government granted asylum to a mere 60 Jews. "No, I'm afraid you can't be Jewish and Irish, no, certainly not, not even for a few years."

"In Joyce's Ulysses, the Orangeman Mr Deasy says, "Ireland had the honour of being the only country which never persecuted the Jews... And do you know why? Because she never let them in." The vitally important word in that passage as far as I'm concerned is "in." My English dictionary defines the word "in" as amongst other things "belonging to, being a member of, having a share or part in". So maybe Mr Deasy was spot on after all."

I felt exactly like Louis with regard to the country of my birth. I had never felt persecuted in Britain, but evidently by the age of 18, I had also not quite felt at home. This was brought home to me very forcibly when I was walking down Allenby Street in Tel Aviv when I first arrived in Israel in 1964. "Aha!" I said to myself. "So this what it feels like to feel at home." Strangely enough, Louis' comment about home being "that place when you can recognise yourself in the people passing in the street" also resonated with me on my first visit to Poland. I felt a strange feeling of familiarity, until I realised how many Polish Jews lived in Israel and helped build Israel. I did indeed recognise myself in the people passing in the street.

In September 2009, I read a book that moved me to tears: *Voices from the Forest – the story of Abraham and Julia Bobrow*. Maybe my emotions were so raw because I met Abe and Julia in person in their Southern California home. They were the first Jewish partisans I met who had physically killed Nazis. Julia had been marched to the edge of a huge pit, where row after row of Jewish women and children were mowed down by machine gun fire. Julia was hit in the back of the neck, but the bullet came out through her face. She was buried alive, but at nightfall she crawled out. She joined a group of Jewish partisans in the forests of western Byelorussia – similar to the Jewish partisan group run

by the four Bielski brothers and featured in the movie *Defiance*. Julia was briefly reunited with her husband Abraham, who had been traumatised by watching his brother and other family members being murdered. Abraham also became a partisan, before joining the Red Army, and participating in the liberation of Berlin.

In Northern Ireland, I met the diminutive Helen Lewis, a Mengele victim. Handing me a signed copy of her book, *A Time to Speak*, she said something that resonated very strongly with me: "Don't believe anyone who claimed that they had a formula how to survive the Holocaust. Look at me. It had nothing to do with any special physical or mental qualities. Millions of people who were stronger, wiser and more courageous than I ever was, did not survive. We were all destined for the gas chambers. I survived. Pure chance."

Somehow, Helen's words gave me a bit of solace regarding the fate of my grandparents. There was no magic formula that could have guaranteed their survival. The brave sacrifice they made – sending their two children into the arms of strangers - was the ultimate, unselfish decision that resulted in my birth and the birth of my descendants.

I'm a Second Generation Holocaust survivor, and a third-generation Wandering Jew. My grandparents moved from Poland to Germany and were forced to return to Poland. My parents were born in Germany and fled to Britain, before settling in Israel. I was born in Britain, and lived in Israel for almost 30 years before moving to Ireland. My heart and my head remain firmly in Israel, it's just my feet that are temporarily in Ireland.

I dedicate this chapter to the memory of my parents and my grandparents.

**Eli and Chava
Fachler at
family
wedding,
2005**



**Chava Fachler
attending a
concert at Bet
Moses, Jerusalem,
2018**



Bluebells

My Story

by

Margaret L



My family's story

Written in Spring 2020 during the Corona 19 virus pandemic

I was asked by Ralph if I would write about my life in the context of living in England but being in a family who were born elsewhere. However, it's also a story for my children and grandchildren to understand something of their story.

I'm Margaret, born in central London 71 years ago, in January 1949. I'm the oldest of 3, my brother Robert born in 1952 and David in 1956. Except for 3 years as an undergraduate student in Leicester and then 13 years in Southampton while married to David Levene, I have always lived in North London.

This story is focussing on the reason why I was born in London, whereas both my parents and their families were born in Central Europe where they had lived for centuries. They were well integrated in the rural areas as well as the cities. They lived in Silesia and Prussia, then part of the German Empire, now Poland. The vignettes of some of my relatives illustrate the journeys they made.

I had always thought that when I retired from paid employment, that I would interview my Mum about her life, as I knew she would have plenty to say! However, by the time I was ready to do so, it was too late. She was suffering from dementia. Then some good luck. I discovered that when she attended the Holocaust Survivors' Centre, she had been interviewed as part of a project to record the lives of those affected by the Holocaust. The 7 tapes- the interviewer had thought 2 tapes would be sufficient - had been archived at the British Library, so I obtained a copy of the interview from there. Her grandchildren and a niece transcribed them; I edited them and added photos. The life story of my Mum was greatly appreciated by her wider family.

I've always known so much more about my mother, Lore's, family. While growing up in the 50s & 60s, also living in N London were her parents, brothers, maternal grandmother, 2 aunts and 2 uncles and a few cousins. Except for a couple of cousins born in London, all had been born in Silesia, and like her, had escaped to London in the 1930s.

***1928 my mother
aged 5 in Berlin***



Lore was short for Leonore, which was never a name I heard used. Within the family, she was called Lolly. And Leonore wasn't even her first name: she had been registered as Emma Leonore! I never asked the question why

she used neither of her officially registered names. I can only guess that she was named after her much-loved paternal grandmother Emma, who had died unexpectedly less than 3 years before her birth. Initially she was known as Emma, but at quite a young age, she said she hated that name, so used a shortened version of her middle name. She had one brother 18 months older than her and one 6 years younger. (Both these brothers, now aged 98 and 90, are alive and well living in their own homes in N London)

At the core of the family were Mum's parents, Luise (nee Schlesinger) and Ernst Rachwalsky. They were both the first born in their families. They married in 1920 in Breslau, the provincial capital of Silesia. Theirs was a civil ceremony only, which reflected the degree to which both families were assimilated into German society, while remaining culturally Jewish.



**1920 Luise
and Ernst's
wedding**

Look at their wedding photo; my grandfather had won the Iron Cross only 2 years earlier at the end of the First World War. At this wedding, the groom's extrovert youngest brother, Curt, then aged 17, told the guests that they would all be invited again when he and the bride's youngest sister, then aged 13, would be celebrating their wedding. After his older brother's wedding, young Curt became increasingly restless: his beloved mother had recently died, his father had quickly remarried a woman whom the family despised; all his older siblings had left home. One of his other brothers introduced him to a business contact in London. As a result of this, Curt moved to London in 1924 to join a metal working company which was thriving in the boom after the War. This was the beginning of his very successful career in the machine tool business based near the Welsh Harp, a large reservoir and now also a nature reserve, in NW London.

As he had announced in 1920, he returned to Silesia to marry his bride, Lore, on 22 December 1927. The two couples remained close friends for the rest of their lives. Within a few years, he and his bride moved to a house designed for them by Rudi Frankel, a Modernist architect, (a relative by marriage) on the Canons Park Estate in Edgware, NW London. It was then a rural enclave where very few Jews lived. They lived at that house for the rest of their lives.

Fast forward to 1935. By then, my grandparents, Ernst and Luise, had 3 children: Henry aged 13; Lore aged 12; and 6 year old Peter. They lived an affluent lifestyle in Dahlem, a suburb of Berlin akin to Kensington in London, with many parks and embassies. However, it was also popular with senior Nazis. The family lived in a large apartment next to the Clinic from which Ernst practised as a gastroenterologist.



***1930s my
grandfather's custom-
built Omniscope x-ray
machine***

He was unusual in that he carried out his own Xray investigations, using a custom built German machine called an Omniscope. This enabled patients to be viewed at varying angles to provide the best possible view on the Xray. (My grandfather's Omniscope machine, the only one ever used in Britain, was displayed in 2006 in London, at the V&A's "Modernism" exhibition.)

The headmaster of Henry's school called an urgent meeting in 1935 with Ernst. He told him that he worried about Henry's safety in the school because of the increasing anti-Semitism. He begged him to move Henry as soon as possible. This forced my grandparents to plan their future. Ernst would have left Germany long before, but Luise was frightened of change. This time she agreed to the plan for their departure, which had to be devised as quickly and secretly as possible. It certainly could not be discussed in front of the children for fear of being overheard by any of the staff and then passed to any over-enthusiastic Nazi sympathisers. The plan was to send their oldest child, Henry, to a boarding school in Mill Hill London, near my grandparents' brother and sister in Canons Park. Lore and Peter, the younger two, were to stay with Luise's mother and middle sister, Erna, in Breslau.



***1936 Ernst
studying in
London***

This was arranged so that Ernst and Luise could move to London, where he would have to study Medicine again to gain the necessary qualification to practice as a doctor in the UK. The quickest way was to sit Edinburgh University's exams. He studied in London and completed the course in a year.

Meanwhile, the 2 children left behind in Breslau had a wonderful time. They were very fond of their aunt Erna, and she of them. She still lived with her mother, as she helped run her late father's men's clothing factory. It was here that my mother learnt about her Jewish heritage, as she attended a Jewish school. This was a very happy year for my mother, except for a family tragedy. Her uncle Fritz was killed as a result of a car crash. This dashing young man had persuaded my grandfather, his brother-in-law, to lend him his prized white Mercedes to take his fiancée, Rita Arm, on a holiday to the south of France. He died after 6 weeks in hospital, but his fiancée suffered only minor injuries and returned to her home in Czechoslovakia.

In April 1937, my mother travelled to London, by train, boat and train. Her Breslau aunt accompanied her to Hamburg. There they were met by another aunt, who took her the next day to the ship bound for Southampton. In Southampton, she was re-united with her parents. Mum's younger brother arrived in England a few months later. At that time, they lived in a rented house in Hendon before moving to a larger house in Ealing. They needed a large house because in the summer of 1939, Luise's widowed mother arrived in England and came to live with them. This was not an ideal arrangement as there was often considerable tension between the two women. She lived with them until her death in 1954 at the age of 80.

I think my mother had a 'good War'. She attended St Paul's Girls' School in Hammersmith when it was evacuated to High Wycombe. The school shared premises with the local Wycombe Abbey School. In the panic of the early months of the War, as the town was categorised as high risk, all foreigners had to be registered as enemy aliens. This included my 16 years old mother! She and one of her schoolfriends, Lieselotte, were taken to a women's internment camp on the Isle of Man. She really enjoyed helping mothers look after their young children, as well as teaching them English. At this stage she was thinking of using her linguistic ability for her future career. Here she met Ellen a girl of similar age, who became a lifelong friend.

However, back at the family home in Ealing, there was outrage. Her father could not tolerate the thought of his daughter being a 'prisoner' in his chosen country of refuge. He had a contact in the Home Office and was able to obtain her release after 6 weeks.

After her last but one year at school, she decided to follow her father into a medical career. This meant switching from French, German and Italian and catching up in the relevant science subjects in one year. She successfully applied for a place in 1941 at the Royal Free Hospital Medical School, then an all-female College in Holborn. It too was evacuated while she was a student, to Exeter University.

Her clinical training took place in hospitals across Greater London and the Home Counties, which was considered safer than staying in Central London. One part of her surgical training was at the Three Counties Emergency Hospital in Arlesey, Bedfordshire. The lectures were given by some of the surgeons one of whom was a Senior Registrar, Gerard Stein, also a German Jewish refugee.

I want to pause the story here and go back in time and place to look at my father's story. I am writing about my

father more than 30 years after his death.

I have supplemented my memory of him with help from: -

Hortense Gordon, nee Heidenfeld, who grew up in the same small town, where there were said to be only 4 Jewish families. (Hortense died last year, mentally alert, aged nearly 100) and the recollections of Evelyn, his niece, who knew him for nine years longer than me! I wasn't able to use Dad's collection of family letters, because my knowledge of German is rudimentary,. Many of these letters were written in High German Gothic script on tissue-like paper. Just too difficult to be of any use to me.

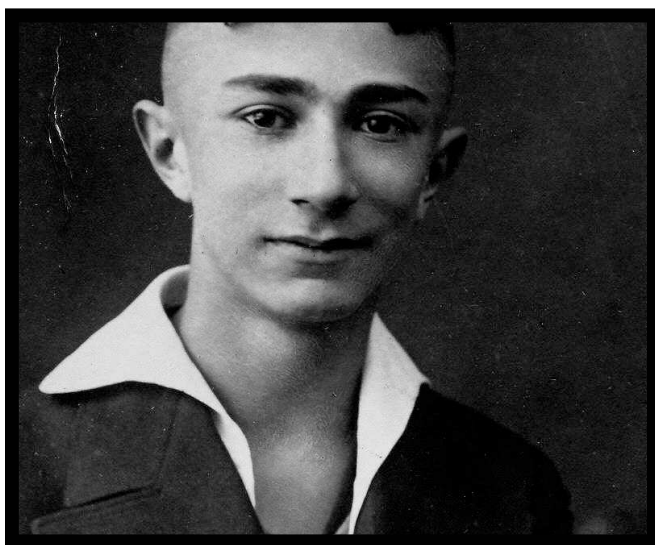
- Gerhard Erwin Stein was born in 1916, in the middle of the First World War to Frieda (née Masur) and Adolf Stein.



***1911 Frieda and
Adolf's wedding***

He had a sister two and a half years older and a sister two and a half years younger. His father was a men's outfitter in the small Silesian town of Kanth (population of about 3000), about 15 kilometres from the regional capital, Breslau (then German, now called Wroclaw in Poland).

The 3 Stein children were brought into the world at their home in Kanth by their family doctor, Dr Heidenfeld, the father of Hortense Gordon,. The Stein children and the two Heidenfeld daughters had private Jewish instruction every Sunday morning from the Breslau Rabbi at the Steins' home. Gerard's Bar-mitzvah took place on March 9th 1929 at the *Neue Synagogue* in Breslau. A long personalised poem, a common custom for any family celebration, was written for his Bar Mitzvah by his favourite uncle, Hans Masur.



***1929 Gerard's
barmitzvah***

This describes a very much loved only son, who worked hard at a local school before passing the exams to a prestigious grammar school in Breslau. It describes him as fastidious about his appearance, checking in the mirror that his hair parting was perfection.

Breslau, with a population of about 600,000, was the third largest Jewish community in Germany after Berlin and Frankfurt, numbering about 31,000 in 1925. According to Wikipedia, the *Neue Synagogue*, one of the largest synagogues in the German Empire and the centre of Liberale Judaism, opened in Breslau in 1872. The synagogue was burnt down on *Kristallnacht*, Nov 9th 1938. The Service was quite traditional in non-Orthodox terms, and is still followed by Belsize Square Synagogue in London,.

My Dad didn't talk much about his childhood, but sometimes, we heard fragments: his mother was always given a bouquet of roses for her birthday in mid-June; the family reared geese in their garden, force feeding them and then killing them according to the laws of *kashrut*; he showed me how to fold clothes such as jackets, to minimise creasing, skills learned from his parents' clothing business; the price tickets were written in code, based on the ten letters of his father's name, so customers had to ask the staff for details; in winter, the temperature regularly dropped to minus 20 degrees C

I know very little about Dad's extended family. Neither parent had grown up in Silesia, but in Prussia, the then German province north of Silesia. I have no idea why they moved to the area, His maternal grandmother, Johanna, lived with them for her final years. He spoke of her with great fondness:

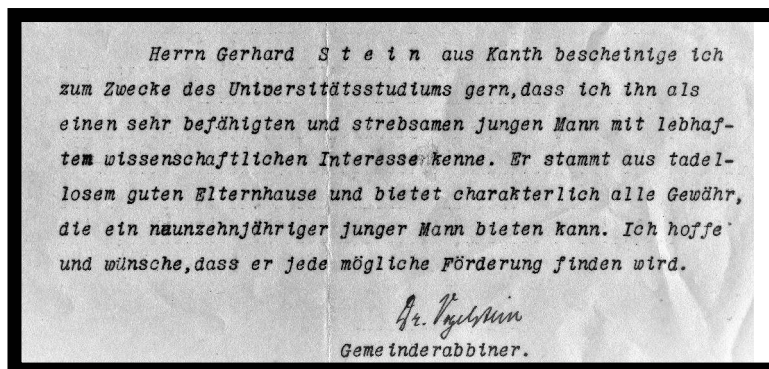
From the age of 13, he attended Johannes Gymnasium (St John's High School) in Breslau, a ¾ hour train journey from home. I have his school report book, which shows he was a conscientious and successful student, doing particularly well in the Sciences. His enjoyment of Latin and Greek probably led to his life-long interest in the derivation of words. He was a very good pianist, loved word puzzles. He wanted to follow one of his maternal uncles into Medicine and was planning to go to the Charles University in Prague. It had a German-speaking faculty, probably a legacy from the days of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, by 1934, it no longer accepted Jewish students, the Nazis having gained power in Germany during the previous year. Instead, someone encouraged him to phone Cambridge University in England. He was accepted as a student on the basis of his marks in his "Abitur" (the German school leaving exams) and a telephone interview! This must have been an especially daunting prospect as he used to say that he was poor at modern languages.

When he left in the autumn of 1934 for England, he was given a letter of introduction by the Breslau *Liberale* Rabbi, Dr Hermann Vogelstein, to the Rabbi at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in St John's Wood, London, Dr Israel Mattuck. This Rabbi and his wife offered him a home throughout his studies, both at their house in Hampstead and their cottage near Aylesbury.

Here is that letter:-

**1934 letter of
introduction**

Translation: From Dr Vogelstein,
Community Rabbi
Tauentziensplatz7, Breslau



Oct 5th, 1934

On behalf of Mr Gerhard Stein, for the purpose of his university study, I am hereby glad to certify that I know him to be a very able and determined young man with a lively interest in learning. He comes from a very good home

and shows as much personal promise as a 19-year-old can show. I hope and wish that he finds all possible support.

The Mattuck family took in another Jewish student from Germany, John Rayner, who later became a rabbi and biblical scholar. Gerard studied in Cambridge from 1934 -7. Some of his fees were paid by money smuggled out of Germany via an uncle in America, but he often told me the story that for one Term, his tutor paid for him. During the summer vacations, he returned to his family in Germany. The last time was in 1938. His two sisters and their husbands left Germany for London in 1939. His parents' reluctance to leave Germany is quite understandable: how were they going to earn money to support themselves, as they spoke no English and their business couldn't be restarted in a different country and culture. After considerable nagging they did agree to leave after the Jewish High Holydays in September 1939. However, this wasn't to be, as War was declared on Sept 3rd 1939.

His parents were increasingly persecuted, being forced to abandon their home and move to cramped quarters in Breslau. I have seen some poignant letters, sent via the Red Cross, to the three siblings. from them during this period saying they were well. They focussed on asking after their son's career and their daughters, who within 2 years of arriving in England, had given birth to 3 grandchildren. I don't know when the 3 in London discovered the fate of their parents. Whenever it was, they learned that their parents were murdered in Lublin in April 1942. They were aged 60 and 67. I have found in *Jewish Virtual Library* that in Lublin, there was a Nazi extermination camp, Belzec, where between February and December 1942, close to half a million Jews were killed in its gas chambers by the German SS and their collaborators.

My Dad qualified as a doctor in 1940 and gained his specialist degree in 1946. It was when he was a Registrar at the Three Counties Emergency Hospital in Arlesey in Bedfordshire, that he met my Mum, who was gaining Clinical experience in hospitals away from the bombing in Central London. He had been advised to join the Army as a qualified doctor, to enhance future applications for consultant posts, so he joined the RMAC and was posted to Singapore. On one of his periods of leave in Ceylon, he bought a sapphire, in preparation for asking m Mum to marry him. When he had a period of home leave, he proposed. She accepted. He returned to the UK in late 1947. He was based in Aldershot for the remainder of his Army service.

**1920 Luise and
Ernst 's wedding**



They married at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in St John's Wood, on Sunday 22nd February 1948, on a very cold snowy day. The main synagogue was still bomb damaged, so the wedding took place in an adjacent Hall. It is ironic that my Dad wore a British Army uniform, whereas his new father-in-law had worn German Army medals

at his wedding only 28 years earlier.

The reception was at a small restaurant in Quex Road in West Hampstead, in the heart of the area nicknamed *Finchley Strasse*, where many German-speaking Jewish refugees had settled.

My grandmother was anxious whether this small restaurant was posh enough. Even worse for her was my parents' decision to start their honeymoon by Underground train from Finchley Road Station to Amersham. They had a week at the Mattucks cottage in Long Crendon and a week in Broadway at the *Lygon Arms*.

My conception a few weeks later was unplanned. My mother was let down by the mail-order contraceptive! She was then an ambitious junior doctor, probably boosted by having won The Dean's medal for skill in Clinical Medicine. (Because of post-War restrictions, she never received the medal, but was happy to accept a Certificate from Princess Elizabeth.) She had to leave a favoured Royal Free house job early, after having assured the interview panel that she had no plans to start a family. A question like that would now be illegal. During the War, the hospital had been bombed in Central London, so was set up in a former fever hospital in Hampstead. 30 years later, the current Royal Free Hospital was built on that site.



**1949 four
generations**

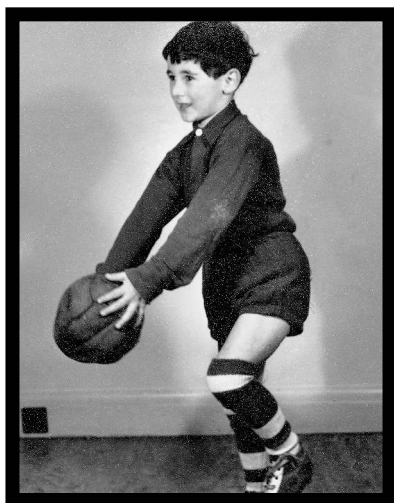
I was born on Monday 17th January 1949 at Westminster Hospital. Because I weighed just under 6 lbs, I had to wear a knitted woollen hat for the first few weeks. In my mother's family, I was the first grandchild, with 6 more to follow. My arrival must have made Mum's parents feel more secure in their adopted country, now they had a British born grandchild.

From hospital, I was taken to my grandparent's home in Ealing until we moved a month later to my uncle and aunt's vacated house at 227 Eastcote Road, Ruislip. Fortuitously for us, they had decided to try their luck in New York.

My earliest memory is of riding in our garden on a green and red metal tricycle, a present from my grandparents. The metal was too cold for me, so I was given a folded cot blanket to sit on. This was probably in the Summer of 1951, when I was 2 1/2

On November 16th 1951, my parents bought their first (and only) house at The Paddocks in Wembley Park. My memory of seeing the house for the first time were the apples. The apples from the many trees in the garden were carefully laid out in trays in the smallest bedroom. I was offered one, but was too shy to accept. Mr and Mrs Hanford, the couple selling the house, had lived there since it was built fifteen years earlier, in 1936.

My father lived there until his death in 1986; my mother until 2008, when she moved to a Residential Care Home in Golders Green. They threw a party to celebrate living there 25 years, so important to them was having a secure base. The main advantage of choosing Wembley Park was that it took 12 minutes by Metropolitan Line train to Baker Street Station. From there it was a short walk for my father to the consulting rooms he rented in Harley Street, where he was building up a small private practice. He had been appointed Consultant ENT surgeon on July 1st 1948, the inception of the National Health Service, working mainly at the Whittington Hospital, in Highgate. One of the other hospitals was the Italian Hospital, which was not part of the NHS, staffed by Italian nursing nuns. He already had a good grounding in Italian from his love of opera, so he enjoyed becoming more fluent.



***1959 my brother
Robert***



***1964 my
brother David***

Nine months after our move to Wembley Park, my brother, Robert was born in August 1952. I remember him as a very cheerful little boy until 4 years later when my younger brother David was born, in June 1956. There were many squabbles between them, which my parents didn't know how to handle. Unfortunately, the gap between them has widened and they have developed very different lifestyles and outlooks. I was probably 3 or 4 years old when I went with my parents to a Passover *Seder* with at the home of Rabbi Mattuck near Hampstead Heath. I remember the house as old and dark with low ceilings. It had shiny wooden floors; I had smart new shoes on and I slipped.

In 1954, Mum's brother and wife, plus a one-year old Anthony, returned to London in 1954. They bought a house 5 doors away from us. Their daughter was born in 1956. It was traumatic for all of us when in May 1959, Anthony died unexpectedly, while ill with chickenpox. No one realised that he also had pneumonia. He had spent so much time in our house, as he had much more freedom to run around with his 3 cousins than at home under the gaze of his strict parents.

Meanwhile, my mother continued to pursue her ambition to become a radiologist, trying to follow in her father's footsteps, but really found her calling when she acted as a locum for a GP friend in Kenton. Soon, she became a part-

time partner to a young GP in the nearby problematic Chalkhill Estate. Here was one of life's co-incidences: many years later, when chatting to my new husband, Gerald, she discovered that this partner and Gerald knew each other as teenagers. In 1967, they volunteered together to go to Israel immediately after the Six Day War hoping to be useful as newly qualified doctors

Family holidays

An early holiday I remember was in 1954 when our family and Mum's cousin and her family (2 children each, then) rented a house in Jaywick Sands on the Essex coast for several weeks in the summer. The fathers joined us at the weekends. We were very near the beach and had great fun building sandcastles and taking occasional donkey rides. I remember that the sewage tank in the house was emptied every morning at 6a.m. by a lorry. (In 2009, Gerald and I visited Jaywick: what an unattractive place!)



Other family holidays were often in the German-speaking parts of Switzerland, as my parents seemed to favour countries where they both could speak the language. However, at home, they didn't usually speak German to each other, but only when someone from an older generation was with them. With hindsight, it would have useful to have been able to learn German from them, but too embarrassing for me and my brothers in the 50s and 60s, so soon after the end of the War

In 1964, we went to Italy to visit distant relatives. (Mum had learnt Italian at school and Dad from the nuns at the Italian Hosp). I stayed with the Pitch family in Siena, while the others went on to Venice and Ravenna. We worked out that the father of the family was my grandmother's first cousin. It didn't matter that the older daughter and I were 2nd cousins once removed; I had an Italian cousin, and she had cousins in "Swinging London"

One of Dad's school friends who also fled from the Nazi regime in Germany, eventually settled with his wife in Digne, a small spa town in Southern France and worked as a Classics teacher. Though both were Jewish, they chose to conceal their origins even from their children. They explained their accents by saying they were from Alsace. A colleague thought he was from Poland and she from England because she spoke to us in English. After our first visit and their return visit, they had to give a more truthful account of their origins to their two sons.

Much later, long after I had left home, but sometimes with one or other of my brothers, my parents' holidays included a visit to various towns and cities in West Germany, with other members of my Dad's Freemason Lodge. He had initiated these exchange visits to promote understanding between the 2 countries. From these early initiatives,

perhaps in the early 1980s, these concepts have developed throughout this country, often focusing on secondary-age school pupils.

Education

The schools that I went to and the ones my brothers attended seem to have a common theme: someone had recommended them. Some of the time that way of choosing worked and sometimes it didn't. I always thought that way was a hangover from not being able to trust officialdom, so you followed your family or trusted friends.

My first school was about a 10-minute walk from home. I remember it was run by 2 elderly sisters, probably neither trained teachers. I have clear memories of learning to read, of making a sewing needle case which I still use; of collecting clothes for Hungarian refugees in 1956, and learning French nursery rhymes (because one of the teachers was French). I was moved from there when I was about 8 to a school in Stanmore, run by Mr and Mrs Beau (short for Beauvoisin), in what had been a pair of semi-detached houses, with a very large garden. I travelled to and from school by myself between Wembley Park and Stanmore Stations on the then Bakerloo line (renamed in 1977 as commemoration of the Queen's Jubilee).

In 1960, I was successful in the entrance exam to St Paul's Girls' School in Hammersmith, chosen mainly because my mother had been a pupil there. I won a Middx County Exhibition award which was means-tested, so I only gained the honour. The journey was long, well over an hour door-to-door, but I thought nothing of it: I read for part of the way and then met up with other girls along the way. The major disadvantage of living such a distance from school is that other pupils may live a similar distance in another direction. This meant that I rarely saw school friends out of school. My social life revolved around friends from our nearby synagogue, Wembley Liberal.

Nowadays, schools seem so caught up with exam results and their league table position, but there was none of that then. There was an expectation that everyone would go on to University which was my ambition too. I worked very conscientiously but my results at 'O' Level were nothing special. I loved Geography and Biology A Level, but found Chemistry a subject I just had to learn by rote. My results were good enough to gain a place at Leicester University to study Social Sciences. I had chosen the social sciences because I knew I wanted to be a social worker. I had been strongly influenced by an informal work experience, arranged by my Mum, with a Medical Social Worker at the Royal Free Hospital. I greatly enjoyed my 3 years in Leicester. I had really found my subject in Sociology, which I specialised in. I was in Halls of Residence for 2 years and then shared a house with 5 others for the last year. It was quite an eye-opener when one of my house-sharers, a friend from the first day at University, became pregnant and coped with baby and Finals.

Work

After University, I started work as a Trainee Child Care Officer with the London Borough of Southwark, qualifying as a social worker in 1972 at Bedford College, then a constituent of London University. During my first year, the Department was re-organised to become Social Services, as a result of the landmark Seebohm Report in 1968 which called for the integration of social welfare services. The next 39 years of my working life, local and central governments struggled with ways to deliver the most effective and cost-efficient service, as well as trying to work closely with the NHS. I worked for several local authorities, as well as 9 years in the voluntary sector, for Jewish Care. For the last 10 years I also worked for the Open University on their Social Work programme. Their

students had all worked as unqualified social workers for years, so they knew what they were training for. Many of the students are from newer waves of immigrants compared with the 1930s Jews. I do hope most are still working in the social work field.

If I was starting out on a career now, I know I wouldn't go into social work, as it now has become such a scapegoated bureaucratic mess. Fifty years after starting work and experiencing the interface between the NHS and the Social Services, integration of these massive services has come to the fore during this current pandemic.

Family life

I met my (first) husband, David Levene, at a Jewish young adults' club weekend away in Brighton in 1971. The group was attached to The Liberal Jewish Synagogue in St John's Wood and attracted, typically, graduates in their 20s to their weekly programme of events. We saw each other every weekend, alternating between London and Southampton, where he lived. Two years later, on July 1st 1973, we married at the LJS (as had my parents in 1948) and set up home in Southampton.



Our first child, Joanna, was born in 1977, followed by Jonathan in 1980. During the children's early years, we were both very conscious of wanting to be involved in a Reform Jewish community but found Bournemouth too far (a 60 mile round trip) to be realistic with young children. Southampton only had a moribund Orthodox community, so in 1983 we became involved with setting up a fledgling Reform community in the south Hampshire area, under the wing of the Bournemouth Reform Synagogue, with the active encouragement of Rabbi David Soetendorp. Very exciting times. However, in this period, David and I drifted apart, leading to my decision to split up in 1985. We divorced amicably the following year. My father's death in 1986 led me to decide to move to London. I wanted to be near my mother in Wembley for mutual support, so researched areas which offered good State education in N London. I spent one half-term week, while Mum looked after the children, driving around to look at possible areas. That led me to Barnet. The three of us moved to North Finchley in July 1987; on the last day of term, I obtained places for both of them at a highly regarded Junior school nearby.

The 3 of us became very involved with Finchley Reform Synagogue (FRS), conveniently located at the end of our road. A real boon for me, a single working mother, not having to worry how to get the children to activities which peaked around the times of their Bat- and Bar-Mitzvahs in 1990 and 1993.

A huge help to me in this period was my mother. She had retired in about 1984 to look after Dad, who was diagnosed with a degenerative neurological illness, which left only his thinking processes and his hearing intact. 20+ years later, Mum's major losses were her cognitive capacity and hearing. It seemed to me a metaphor for their different personalities. She looked after him devotedly until his death in 1986 at the age of 70. Coinciding with her need for some help looking after Dad, an experienced nurse decided that she must sign up for work with

a nursing agency to enable her to become financially independent of her alcoholic husband. This lady, Beatrice, and Mum, soon became good friends. Beatrice stayed loyal to Mum until Mum's death 28 years later

Widowhood at the age of 63 gave her about 20 years to throw herself into activities at Wembley Liberal Synagogue, the Holocaust Survivors Centre and her family, but in particular my two children. By the time she was showing signs of Alzheimer's Disease, my circumstances had changed, so I was able to make sure she was well looked after, first in her own home, then at a Residential Home set up for those who had been victims of Nazi regimes.

Life since meeting Gerald

In December 1998, good friends invited me to dinner with another of their friends, recently widowed Gerald Levin. The following month, we were placed next to each other at a Bat-Mitzvah party. Both hostesses thought they were the first to bring us together! Perhaps Ian, the first host, with his late wife Pam, was wanting to drum business for himself as the Marriage Secretary at FRS?? We already knew each other and all the children through FRS, but didn't go out with each other until the summer of 1999. A Kenwood concert, an 8 mile Ramblers Association walk from Little Venice to Limehouse (chaperoned by Gerald's older daughter, Deborah!) and a river trip to Greenwich were our first dates. Gerald has 2 daughters, (with his first wife, Sue) and 3 step-sons (from his 2nd marriage to the late Sue Bellman). Our relationship soon blossomed and we were married at FRS (of course!) on August 19th 2001, with all the children acting as "best people", then aged 18-30.



***2001 Margaret and
Gerald's wedding
with 7 'best
people'***

Nearly 19 years on, the children have partners and their own children. We have 13 grandchildren.

A highlight of the years since 2013 have been the weekends away with all the blended family, nicknamed "Clan Gerald". The first weekend away was a surprise for Gerald: he thought that just he and I were going away to celebrate his 60th birthday. When we arrived at the rented cottage, all of the "best people", plus by then 2 partners, jumped out of the bushes.



2016 our blended family

He enjoyed that weekend so much that we have repeated it every year since. There are now 29 people in “Clan Gerald”, so finding a suitable venue has become much harder. This year, we had to cancel our weekend because of the Cova 19 pandemic, but optimistically have re- booked for next year. The seven “Best People “have become seven families, so of course there is some divergence between them but hopefully they will still retain some very strong bonds and look upon each other as siblings created by Gerald’s 3 marriages.

My social life revolves directly or indirectly around Finchley Reform Synagogue. I could not believe when I moved back to London 33 years ago what a diverse, ready-made friendship group I found. This synagogue examines everything Jewish and looks for links with our daily experiences. Who would have guessed that the cyclical reading from the *Torah* at the beginning of “Lockdown” was the account of the biblical plagues amongst the enslaved Hebrews in Egypt. Plenty to discuss that week. The professional staff and lay leaders have produced such a wide range of activities including Services for these extraordinary and unsettling times. I revel in such activity and see it as part of a show of resilience against the Nazi attempts to obliterate the Jewish people. I want to be part of that.

Of course, I owe everything to FRS because there I met Gerald.

Gerald and I have had a wonderful time together. We have lived in the house he and Sue Bellman bought in 1995 for them and their 5 student/ young adult children. In good weather, as we have experienced in much of this Pandemic time, gardening happily absorbs many hours for both of us. For 3 years, we opened our garden to the public under the auspices of the National Garden Scheme; subsequently, we scaled down the profile, still raised money for charity, with the emphasis on tea served in a colourful garden. Every plant in our garden has been carefully photographed by me from all angles, in all seasons.

We have travelled widely, always with me stopping to take just one more photo! Many of our travels have been immortalised in photobooks and calendars, taking an unexpected amount of time to produce, but well worth the effort. Sometimes, our travels have been planned around family events, such as weddings in Los Angeles, Haarlem and Israel. We went to Argentina to meet Gerald's younger daughter, Miriam, and family during their family Gap Year. I had discovered that I had a distant relative in Argentina; we met his widow who was so welcoming and so informative about her late husband's branch of the family.

I have delved quite extensively into my family's history. More interested in the character of the people than merely recording the dates of their birth, marriage and death, I have tried to interview as many people in the wider family as possible, and then share that within the family. We have also really enjoyed exploring so many corners of London, usually by public transport and then on foot, which now will be very different.

We play Bridge, Gerald with more of an innate competitive ability, me with more of a struggle always to remember the obvious response just when needed. In these strange times, we have adapted to playing online, simultaneously we are told, with about 50,000 people worldwide. Gerald obtains huge satisfaction by being able to produce wonderful sounds on the piano. We hope we can continue to host our musical soirées.

We hope to continue many activities together, but have become so aware of the unpredictability of our lifespans especially while this virus envelopes us, physically and mentally. This is in addition to my diagnosis in 2011 of Parkinsons Disease, life-limiting but not life threatening. So far, with the help of increasing medication, I'm doing well, but I'm aware that as it progresses, life will get more restrictive.

While we have not so far lost any family or friends to the virus, we know of those who have and also those who have been very ill. We are very aware that the lifestyle we had established is unlikely ever to return, even if a reliable vaccine is widely available soon. Travelling around London freely (in both senses) will change, because we will now always wonder what infectious illnesses others on a crowded Northern Line train are incubating.

I am hopeful that some things will improve, but the current display of racism, not just in the USA, is very frightening.

I want to conclude by looking at the questions posed by Ralph when he developed this project.

My brothers and I remember our father being terrified of dogs; he regarded them as guards and attackers, never pets. He found it difficult to be assertive, so he gave in to my nagging to have a pet dog, of which he remained fearful. This characteristic probably developed when he just had to keep his head down and avoid any unnecessary contact with post-1933 Nazi authorities. He couldn't impose any sanctions on one of my brothers during a rebellious adolescence

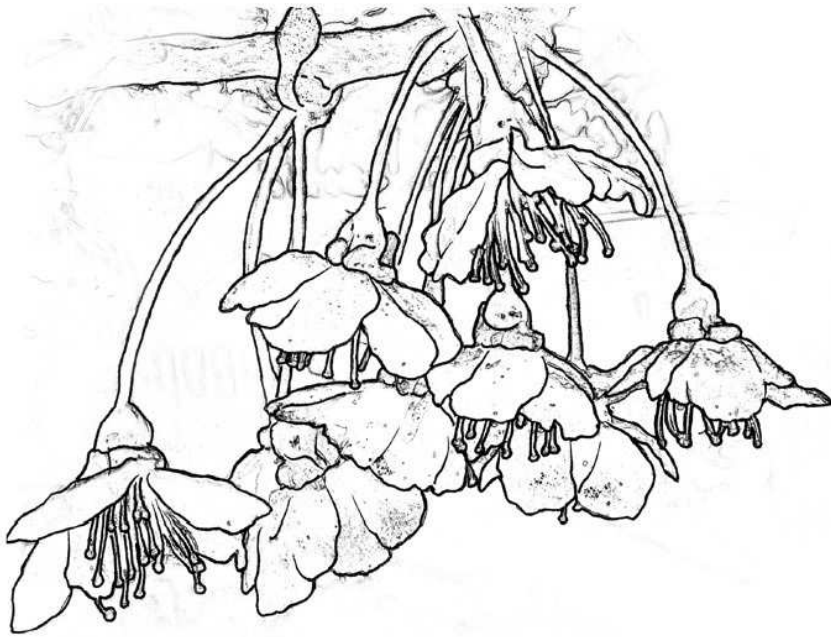
I have never felt really English, whatever that means nowadays. As a child in the '50s and 60s, I remember being asked why my parents spoke with an accent, so they, and with the implication, you, can't be English. I don't think that makes me feel more European. My main identity is Jewish.

In my extended family, most of my generation now have very tenuous links with Judaism. I haven't had the courage to ask any of them why they have turned away from Judaism. For some, was the shadow of the Holocaust too over-powering? I have to add that many of my parents' generation were brought up in Germany (and neighbouring countries) with the belief that they were so well integrated into German (or Czech or Hungarian) society, that there was no need to think too much about preserving their Judaism. I'm fascinated that a few nieces and nephews in the next generation, who were brought up with minimal links to Judaism, have made tentative attempts to find out more of their Jewish heritage. This gives me hope.

Margaret Levin

June 2020





Wild Cherry

My Story
by
Gerald L



Gerald Levin: a short biography

I was born in Derby (at the Royal Infirmary) on April 4th 1943. My father had been working as a pathologist at the hospital since 1942 We lived in what was then a village, Mickleover, but is now a suburb of Derby. I have only a few recollections of my life there: a large garden with an orchard; sitting on a pile of grass after the lawn had been cut; losing a treasured toy and never finding it; being forced to sit in my high chair until lunchtime to finish my porridge (this was wartime) and falling into Mrs Rix's (a neighbour) pond and frightening the life out of my mother!

We moved back to Willesden in the spring of 1946 when I was three years old with my sister Judith (only a few weeks old) and older brother Michael aged thirteen.



***Gerald & sister
Judith Levin 1947***

We returned to our house at 104 Leighton Gardens, Willesden, which had been rented out for the last four years but had not been damaged during the bombing raids. Four houses close by had received a direct hit by a doodlebug and were completely destroyed.

I started school at Chamberlain Road primary at the age of five and a half and have memories of much freedom until then, playing at home in the house, garden and pavement. I shared a bedroom with my brother Michael. He was so much older that we did not have a close relationship (unlike with my sister only three years younger than me).

I have little recollection of my time at this primary school other than I quickly learnt to read and enjoy books. At the age of eight I was enrolled at Westcroft, a small preparatory school in Cricklewood presided over by Miss Challen, a fierce elderly lady, who used to smack our open hands with a foot ruler for minor misdemeanours. This was very painful. At this age I was not the best student and found maths in particular, hard going but somehow managed to gain a place at the nearby Haberdasher's Aske's school.

Where we lived: After a few years my father told us we were moving to Hampstead Garden Suburb (HGS) where he had acquired a plot of land on which we were going to have a house built. There was much excitement as we examined the architects plans of our detached house, which was large compared to the semi we currently owned. It turned out, however, to be of modest proportions compared with houses nearby built before WW2. Post war shortages of building materials markedly limited the size of our new house, as well as other houses being built at the same time. The shortage of materials had the effect of lowering the cost of the land, which made it possible for my family to consider the move.

My sister Judy and I had much fun on our weekly visits to Winnington Close watching the progress of the build and clambering over the scaffolding. At this time, ours was the only house going up on a large area of surrounding scrubland. I have never lost interest in admiring houses and their ground plans. This has stood me in good stead when family members are buying a home and occasionally asking advice.

We moved in the winter of 1954 and as the house wasn't yet habitable, we rented a flat over a newsagents shop in Market Place by Ossulton Way. I had made one or two close friends in Willesden, but after the move lost touch. I made new friends, mostly at school, but also some who lived locally (David Dell, Peter Stern).

I enjoyed living in HGS, as by age eleven I had my own bike, a Raleigh, with 4 gears and dynohub. This was a touring model which I enjoyed cycling over all the rough paths of Hampstead Heath, long before mountain biking became popular. I really enjoyed the freedom of the bike and I don't remember being unduly restricted in my exploration of the wider area by my parents.

The downside of the Suburb in the 1950's was that our neighbours were mostly wealthy and gradually I felt like a fish out of water as the youngsters I associated with had much more pocket money, smarter clothes, and access to parental cars than I ever had. Eventually, I cultivated a form of inverted snobbery as I felt my school progress and admission to medical school gave me a different (ie intellectual) one-upmanship! Now Winnington Road and Bishop's Avenue are the destination of some of the world's wealthiest people, in pursuit of a safe haven and an investment. This leads to the construction of bigger and 'better' houses, often left empty for years, going gradually to ruin. They are then sold and the cycle begins again.

Jewish life: we did not practise much if any Jewish ritual largely as my father was not interested and we did not keep the laws of kashrut other than not eating pork or shellfish. My mother grew up in a kosher home and as a child attended Synagogue, (partly to sing in the mixed choir, unusual for a United Synagogue and now banned). My father could not have gone to Shul on any regular basis as he worked at the Queen Elizabeth Children's Hospital every Saturday morning until retirement in 1971.

I can remember the postwar food rationing and very occasionally we ate bacon when other meat was scarce.

I was sent to the Federation Shul in Willesden for Hebrew classes and later to the United Synagogue in Norrice Lea, even though we were not full members there. I was not really expected to have a Bar Mitzvah as my parents could not see the point, and may have been worried about the expense. I was asked my opinion on this, aged 12 but was happy to decline this rite of passage. I later came to regret this. When I was about fifteen my mother increasingly came to feel she was missing out on Jewish life and we joined Norrice Lea Synagogue as full members but without seats in the main Shul for the Yom Tovim. Judy and I were taken in hand by Freda Nathan, a

childhood friend of my mother who lived next door, and we accompanied her to Shul, often weekly. At the same time, we were given weekly Hebrew lessons by Ruth Bornstein, to get our Hebrew reading and language up to scratch so we wouldn't feel completely lost in a prayer book! Judith and I became regular Shul-goers for a few years. I then became disenchanted with the Orthodox style of prayer and its content so I attended less frequently.

At age 17 in 1960 I began medical studies at the London Hospital Medical School in Whitechapel, not far from where my parents were brought up. By 1960 most of the Jews, although not their clothing businesses, had moved from the East End of London to more desirable suburbs in Ilford or Golders Green. I enjoyed walking to the London docks then being closed down. I can still recall the smell of spices in the grimy streets of warehouses fronting the Thames.

I enjoyed my studies but did not fully partake in student life as I was living at home. My father was adamant I should not study away from London, citing the additional cost but probably also worrying about what I might get up to that he would not approve of. Both my parents were very strict. Although I never doubted their love, I always felt I was kept on a short leash. Pocket money was almost nonexistent ('what do you need money for, don't we provide everything') and girl friends absolutely forbidden until I was old enough to support a wife. The lies I had to resort to when meeting girl friends were legion.

The 'pill' became widely available in the early sixties and the sexual freedom it offered the London Hospital medical students was taken full advantage of. In my clinical years we were sent to hospitals around Essex for resident specialty training so living away from home became more common for me.

After graduating in May 1965 I did my pre- registration House Physician post at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital Welwyn Garden City (a brand new building) followed by 6 months as House Surgeon at King George V Hospital Ilford. I enjoyed this year very much and was given a surprising amount of responsibility for one so inexperienced. That summer I started a 2 year full time MSc in biochemistry at University College London, financed by a Medical Research Council training award. I was now following firmly in my father's footsteps intending to specialise in pathology and biochemistry.

In retrospect I am not so sure this was my best move as my father achieved greatness in his field, and I regret not settling for general practice or general medicine, as I have skills which would have suited these specialties and comparisons with my father's illustrious career would not be made (at least by myself). My later career as a consultant/ senior Lecturer in Clinical Biochemistry at St George's Hospital Medical School in 1975 was reasonably fulfilling but cutting edge areas of clinical science were no longer in my chosen field.

Either consciously or unconsciously I began to excel in areas where there was no competition or comparison with siblings or parents. I started piano lessons aged 10, really enjoyed making music and my technique improved greatly. By the time I was 15 or so I was borrowing volumes of Beethoven concertos from the library to play passages within my capability (or not) as well as developing my repertoire of classical piano works. My love affair with the instrument has continued throughout my life, to the extent that playing daily is essential to my wellbeing. Aged 77 I am still preparing new pieces for informal concerts with my regular duet partner, Norman Cohen, despite hand arthritis now limiting my technique.

I was also very sporty and a cross country runner (winter) and athlete (summer), co holding the school junior high

jump record aged 15 (1.6m) with the now dated western roll style. I ran all distances and was a useful javelin thrower. At Medical School there were so few members of the college team that we had to double up in almost every event. I managed everything except the pole vault! I did not continue athletics after University but became a competent squash player and played once or twice week until I was 73, eventually getting too many hamstring injuries however long I warmed up!

Now I walk, as often as possible, either alone or with a selected friend to comply with the (new) coronavirus regulations. Pre coronavirus, I took monthly walks (both urban and rural) with a group of likeminded gentleman friends where conversation always flowed. Choosing the route, a pub that serves reasonable food and allows our accompanying dogs is part of the challenge for whoever is deputed to organise the next walk. At the present time, sadly, these walks are no longer permitted.

When I was a teenager I was required to help look after our large garden and while I became proficient at mowing and weeding, also began to enjoy watching the plants grow and began to develop a now lifelong interest in gardening. During my married life I had the opportunity to nurture several gardens and with my second wife Sue Bellman we designed and built our garden in Finchley although she did not survive to see it in its maturity. Margaret and I have continued to develop it to the point that we have opened several times for the National Gardens Scheme. We both find working in the garden very therapeutic as well avoiding the need for pilates for myself as many of the movements are made naturally in its practice!

Marriage

I met my first wife, Susan Barron at the wedding of my best friend, David Dell, in November 1966, at which I was the best man and she was a bridesmaid. (David's father Stanley had married Susan's mother, Belle a few weeks previously)! Sue and I quickly became an item. I was very attracted by her good looks, sense of humour and sociability, attributes I probably unconsciously felt I lacked. She was at this time training to be a nurse at Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children and I was a junior doctor at the London Hospital in Whitechapel where I had trained.

In June 1967, the Six Day War broke out and I volunteered to go to Israel to help front-line doctors by assisting in local hospitals which might now be short staffed. I was sent to Ashkelon and soon found that very few foreign doctors were actually required as the Israeli Government needed only a very small number of anaesthetists, trauma and neuro surgeons to deal with their casualties. I was one of about 100 doctors and nurses who were flown to Israel by The Jewish Agency two weeks after the war broke out. The Jewish Agency must have known this position but capitalised on the prevailing euphoria which provided them with a marvellous opportunity to foster Aliyah.

During this time, I was receiving daily letters from Sue Barron, much to the amusement of the staff at the hospital. I reciprocated but not so frequently. Sue wanted to join me but was told that she would not be granted permission to leave Leicester Hospital to nurse in Israel. On my return from Israel, we became engaged and were married the following August 1968.



***Sue Levin,
Deborah & Miriam
1982***

We had two daughters, Deborah, born on 27 January 1971, and Miriam, 27 August 1974. Our first house was in Cissbury Ring South in Woodside Park, a lovely semi-detached house where I spent many happy hours building and planting the garden.

After nine years, we moved to Woodside Grange Road to 'Green Trees' a much larger house with a beautiful garden. By this time, both girls were at Haberdasher's School in Elstree and doing well. We had joined Finchley Reform Synagogue (FRS) where the girls were enrolled in the Cheder. Sue previously had no real Jewish family life and we found the style of service and the Rabbi, Jeffrey Newman, very much to our liking. The Reform / Liberal liturgy reflects the Jewish experience of living in a modern world by including prose and poetry of Jewish writers, connected to traditional and contemporary themes. This is very important for me and particularly to Sue.

At the age of 40, Sue was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis and our lives changed dramatically. In 1989, when she was 44, she left the family home and eventually lived with a female partner, a relationship that lasted only a few years. Deborah and Miriam remained with me. The separation affected them deeply as they were so attached to both of us.

Sue's health rapidly deteriorated until she was only able to move her right arm. She died aged 63 in 2009 having been confined to bed at home for many years, looked after by carers three times a day and by Deborah and Miriam. They organised her overall care, finances and supply of cannabis from dealers (then illegal) as it provided some relief from her continual muscle pain. I have nothing but admiration for my daughters, who looked after their mother's needs for many years as well as working and bringing up their own families.



Wedding of Gerald to Sue Bellman 1986 with Deborah, Miriam, Sam Sue Bellman, Gerald, David and Joel)

In 1991, I met Sue Bellman, also a member of FRS and we eventually became very close, moving in together in July 1993, where we now had the challenge of five children under one roof – my two girls and her three boys, Joel, Sam and David. We married on 16 June 1996.

Sue was a Consultant Audiological Physician at Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital where she ran the very successful cochlear implant (bionic ear) programme. At the time of her premature retirement through ill health, 100 children had been successfully implanted. At a party for Sue at GOS, it was wonderful for me to witness when a non-hearing child was able to respond appropriately to their mother's voice.

On the whole, the families merged successfully and we had five very happy years together. Sadly, Sue had a form of leukemia which worsened and for which there was essentially no treatment. On 8 November 1998, aged 51 she passed away at home surrounded by all of us.

In 1999, I became close to Margaret Levene whom both Sue Bellman and I had known. She was also a member of FRS and our children were at Cheder together. In August 2001 we were married and our family enlarged yet again with Jonathan and Joanna Levene. The children quickly got to know one another better and have been very happy in one another's company since this time.

Now all our children have partners, and all bar one, have two children each, so we feel very blessed with our 13 grandchildren as of May 2020.

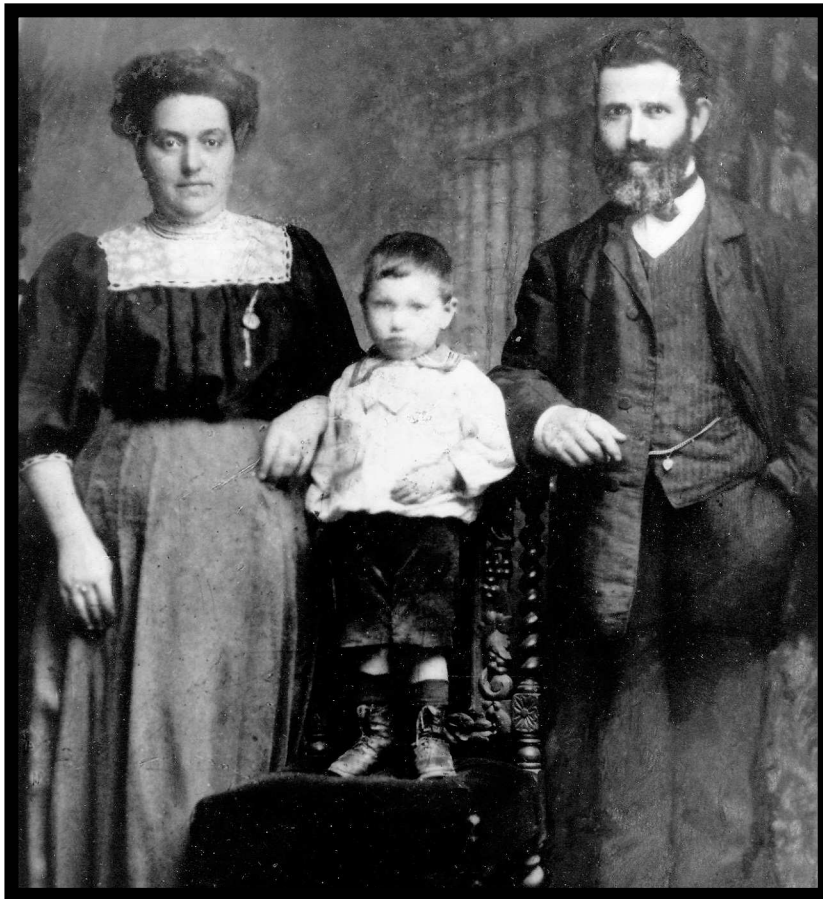
Parents and Grandparents:

I knew only one of my four grandparents as the others had died long before I was born.

Lewis and Annie Levin my Paternal Grandparents

They emigrated to England from Gomel (now in Belarus), then in the Pale of Settlement (a part of Russia where Jews were permitted to live). It was a moderate sized industrial city with a large Jewish population. Their desire to emigrate was driven by a combination of poverty, pogroms and forced recruitment into the Czar's army although I remember nothing specific from my father. I have subsequently gained more information from a cousin deeply into genealogy, who has obtained names, dates and place names for the Levin family in Russia, going back to the early 19th century. Barney's parents arrived here in about 1895 and settled in the East End of London. He was a maker of paper bags and barely managed to scrape a living.

My Father Barnett Levin, always known as Barney



*Barney c Annie & Lewis
Levin 1907*

My father was born in 1905 and his brother Nyman in 1906. Shortly after Nyman's birth their mother died. This left Lewis to bring up two toddlers and an older daughter (also named Annie) from an earlier marriage. Of this period in my father's life I have almost no information and only one photograph. My father very occasionally would refer to his early life and recalled hiding silently in the flat when the rent collector called as money was so short. My father

and his brother were very close and very bright. He matriculated from Raines School (as did my mother) and the brothers wanted to take their Higher Schools Certificate (equivalent to A levels). Lewis wanted them to help in his paper bag business and was so insistent that they complied but were also determined to continue studying at night school. Eventually each passed the exams to gain places at Imperial College London to study chemistry (my father) and physics (Nyman). My father recalled that his father was something of a dreamer and was convinced it was possible to make a perpetual motion machine. His sons, with their deeper understanding of science were sceptical. Eventually the pressure from their father and their different outlook and temperaments proved so great that the brothers left home. They were able to support themselves now from scholarships each had obtained while studying and completing their Ph D's, also from Imperial College.

I do have admiration for Lewis supporting such a young family without much help but his sons understood that their future in England lay in becoming educated to the highest level. So it proved: my father became a world famous paediatric pathologist and Nyman eventually became Director of the UK Atomic Weapon's Research Establishment at Aldermarston. Some members of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament who read this, may even have demonstrated outside his house or workplace!

Barney became a lecturer in chemistry at Guys Hospital but eventually saw there were more opportunities for career progression in medicine. As a mature student he was allowed to study at Guys while holding on to his day job



***(Barney and Dinah
Levin on their
wedding day.
December 1931***

After marriage to Dinah in December 1931, they moved from a rented flat in Osbaldeston Road, Stoke Newington and bought a house in Leighton Gardens, Willesden. Barney had to study at night to complete the medical curriculum. How he found time to attend clinics and ward rounds, I never asked. It must have been a time of considerable frustration for my mother as my older brother Michael was born in February 1933 and she was mainly on her own caring for him. Opportunities for socialising must have been limited especially after war broke out in 1939. After graduation my father was seconded to the Derbyshire Royal Infirmary for the next six years as assistant pathologist. He was appointed Consultant Paediatric Pathologist to the Queen Elizabeth

Hospital, Hackney Road, in 1946 and we returned to London.

Over the years Barney built up a thriving pathology laboratory and became a pioneer in the field of inborn errors of metabolism, particularly of the 'urea cycle' He and his colleagues published many papers documenting the underlying enzyme deficiencies in these rare childhood diseases. He, more or less single handedly, put the QEH Children's hospital 'on the map'.

My father did not have hobbies but really enjoyed travelling. He and my mother explored the world years before the era of cheap air travel. They travelled in the 1970s to Kabul with hippies who were looking for cheap hashish, to central America and to Iran (amongst many other countries) long before travel companies took the hassle out of the bookings. He would often spend a year planning their next trip and they were often out of the UK for six to eight weeks at a time.

Sadly, aged 73, Barney suffered a catastrophic stroke which deprived him of his power of speech, a consequence of many years of atrial fibrillation, (a common heart rhythm disorder) and in his last ten years he could only speak simple words. Nowadays this is much less likely happen as the risk of stroke is lowered, by regulating the heart rhythm and by taking long term anticoagulants.

For a man who was an intellectual power house, the loss of speech was immensely frustrating and very trying for my mother who suddenly had to shoulder all the responsibilities of managing their life and the household finances. In time she became very proficient and managed everything together with their portfolio of shares and investments very successfully. She also became the matriarch of the immediate family, a role that suited her.

Todras and Fanny Schneider, my Maternal Grandparents.

***Todras, Jenny, Fanny
and Annie Schneider
(circa 1900)***



The parents of Dinah Levin, Fanny and Todras Schneider came to England from Odessa in the 1890s. The city lay outside the Pale of Settlement and is now in southern Ukraine. This city, a Black Sea port was established by Catherine the Great of Russia in 1794 to promote grain export. Migration to it was encouraged (even for Jews) to enable the city to develop. Jews took advantage of the relative political and religious freedoms. Jewish writers and early Zionism flourished. There was much poverty but also prosperity amongst the Jews of Odessa. My grandparents emigrated after Todras had completed his period of service in the Tsars army. You were required to serve for up to 25 years and for some it could be a death sentence. I visited Odessa in 2014 and it is a grand city possibly modelled on Parisian lines. However, further from the centre the streets and buildings are poorly maintained. I did not have addresses for my grandparents.

My mother never asked her mother about her early life although she remembers Fanny telling her that as a child, she was often left alone in their shack while her parents went out to work.

They settled in London in Stepney Green in a small house. Todras became a presser and his surname Schneider (cutter) reflects his occupation. He was always very smartly dressed. Although both he and Fanny were illiterate he eventually learned to read the English newspapers. Yiddish was spoken at home but the children replied in English. (This was very likely true for my father's family also). My mother remembers that their family home was a very happy place, unlike that of my father.

Mother (Dinah Levin)

Here is a short verbatim extract of my mother's memoirs as told to my daughter Miriam in 2002:

'I am Dinah Levin and I was born 91 years ago (1910) in the East End of London, in a tenement somewhere near Cable Street which is off Commercial Road in a very very poor part of London. I was the youngest of six daughters and there was a brother after me. When I was about two my family moved to a small terraced house in Stepney Green in Latimer St: cold water tap in the scullery, outside toilet and three bedrooms. For baths, we heated up water and we had a great long zinc tub which hung up in the scullery and used that as a bath. Occasionally we went along to the local public baths- that was luxurious –for threepence you had this tub full of hot water and you could lie in it for as long as you liked and when the bath got cold you could call out ' more hot water to number three' or whatever your number was (laughter). It sounds quite nice but now I think, looking back on it, we were really poverty stricken. We slept two to a bed with two beds in each bedroom. But my mother was a wonderful manager – always plenty to eat and if friends came there was enough for them as well. Other memories of that time were the widespread use of horse drawn cabs which had not yet been replaced by the car. At the end of the next street were stables.

I remember that next door to the stables was a church school whose ringing bell was the signal for me to get up in the morning. I also remember the women taking their 'cholent' to the bakers on Fridays so that their families could eat warm food on Shabbos.

We did not observe this custom.'



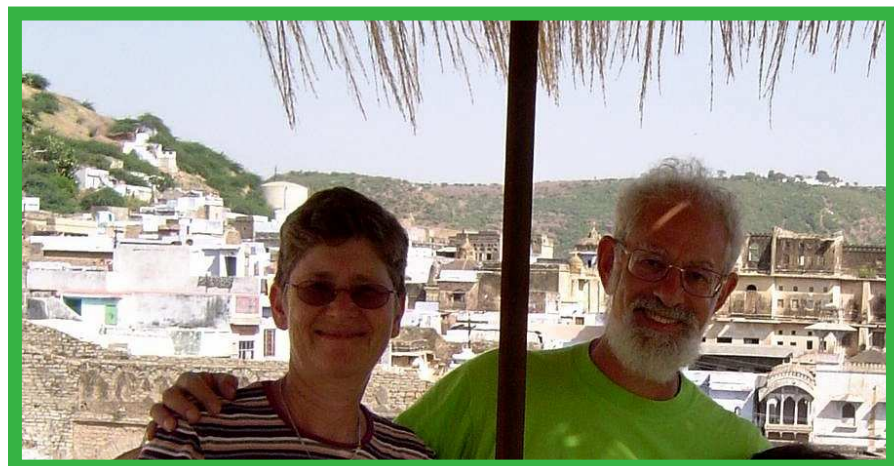
Wedding of Jenny Schneider to Hymie Hockley 1921: with her five of her sisters: Sally, Rosie, Jenny, Hymie, Lily and Dinah, (plus unknown pagegirl)

My mother was the only one of her siblings to stay on at school (Raine's Foundation in Stepney) and take her Higher Schools Certificate. In 1928 she gained a place at University College, London to study chemistry. In those days it was relatively uncommon for girls to attend university. She did well and graduated with an upper second, the line between her name and a first class degree was drawn only one name above hers in the results list. This slightly rankled all her life. She always regretted not using her degree, as she married my father shortly after graduating. For professions such as teaching you could not remain in employment if married. There may also have been a belief that men should be able to support a wife, and by letting her work was in some sense a rebuke on their manhood?

After Barney's death my mother gradually became much more accepting of life styles rather different from her own, welcoming non Jewish members of the family with a warmth that would have been absent when Barney was alive.

Siblings:

I was close to my **sister Judith** while growing up. We were married within a few weeks of each other in 1968. I remember telling my mother of my forthcoming engagement to Susan Barron and her face fell with disappointment, not because she disapproved of Sue, but because in the space of a few weeks her nest would suddenly empty and her role in our family life would greatly diminish.



Judy and Roger with us in India 2003

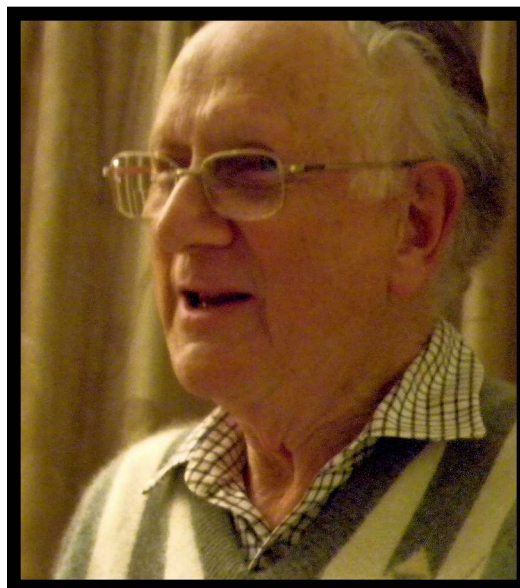
Judy married Roger Kaye in June 1968 and 18 months later they emigrated to Israel where they have lived ever since, bringing up three children and now have six lovely grandchildren. Their move was a blow for my parents, especially my father to whom Judy was the apple of his eye. They gradually became accustomed to visiting annually and later Judy and Roger would come to the UK. Sue and I too would go to Israel every few years and this has continued throughout my life. I especially enjoy meeting up with Roger for our annual skiing trip in France. Both made their living in Israel from speaking English: my sister has a maths degree and became a programmer in the early days of mainframe computers but became a home tutor in English to children. Roger, after a stint in the defence industry (he was a physicist with experience of lasers), became a technical writer (in English) for a company making computer chips.

Over the years I tend to avoid discussion of Israeli politics with them. As Judy says, her children have all been called up for military service and their lives are periodically placed on the line, especially for nephew Avi, who served in a tank corps. I also have much sympathy with the view that one needs to live in Israel before adopting strong opinions on the Palestinian issue. I have never lived with the threat of suicide bombers (the Separation Wall reduced suicide bombing to almost nothing) or rocket attacks from Gaza. The Middle East is now (2020) in such turmoil, and with Iran such an implacable enemy of Israel, that discussion of possible long term solutions with anyone seems almost irrelevant.

Michael

When young my brother Michael always felt rather remote to me. I was however immensely pleased with the 'O' gauge track he constructed for me. He made the track and working electric points from scratch. He was also tall at over six foot and I remember boasting about my very big brother when I occasionally felt threatened. Whether he would ever have come to my aid in an emergency was never tested! Like his father and uncle, at 17 Michael was awarded a state scholarship to study at Imperial College. His name was on the Honours Board at Haberdashers School which was a source of considerable pride to me. He obtained his PhD in Xray crystallography in 1956. He married Veronica Klein in 1958 and they had three children. After several years at the Coal Board he moved to British Oxygen, where his projects included studying corrosion on undersea rigs. At age 40 he was made redundant but after one year was appointed a physics teacher at Haberdasher's Askes' School (where all our children attended). He became a highly regarded teacher and chess mentor, and generations of boys spoke warmly of his influence.

***Michael Levin his
80th birthday***



Aged 36 Veronica developed breast cancer which, after a few years of reasonable health, returned with a vengeance and very sadly she died aged 44. Michael brought up Jonathan, David and Naomi on his own for the next 10 years before marrying Henny Lehman in 1991. Michael and I became much closer in the last 30 years of his life. He enjoyed many years of happiness with her until he became unwell about 3 years ago and sadly died aged 86 on 24th January 2020, just before the coronavirus pandemic struck the UK.

My life now and in retrospect:

As a second generation Englishman, I do not feel an 'outsider' but nor do I feel an 'insider' either. I put this down to my strong sense of Jewish cultural identity, that English was spoken at home, that I did not know my grandparents and so could not hear their stories, and finally because my parents never spoke about life in the Pale as told to them by their parents. I have always assumed it was a period in my grandparents lives that they were happy to forget.

I have enjoyed nearly 20 years of a very happy marriage to Margaret and despite the consequences of aging, (I am now 77), don't think I have ever been happier. This is partly because we are both retired (11 years now) and enjoy a good standard of living with my generous Health Service pension. When my parents died, Michael, Judy and I inherited money from the sale of their house in Hampstead Garden Suburb. Its value increased about 500 times between purchase in 1954 and sale in 2008! I thank my father regularly for his foresight in choosing to build his house where he did. I also suspect we are the last of the generation to expect continuously rising living standards. We are also of the generation where the UK has not fought a major war. The big external events in my life include: the fall of communism, the AIDS pandemic, the debate over continued membership of the European union, the global financial crash of 2008 and now the Corvid 19 pandemic. I should also add global poverty and the debate over how to deal with global warming.

Margaret was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease nine years ago, and is doing well despite increasing doses of medication to reduce stiffness. We have not really been held back other than not being able to take the long walking holidays of 15 years ago. We have continued to travel all over the world and really enjoy exploring new cities and cultures, although foreign travel is now off limits until a vaccine for Corvid 19 becomes available, hopefully in 2021.

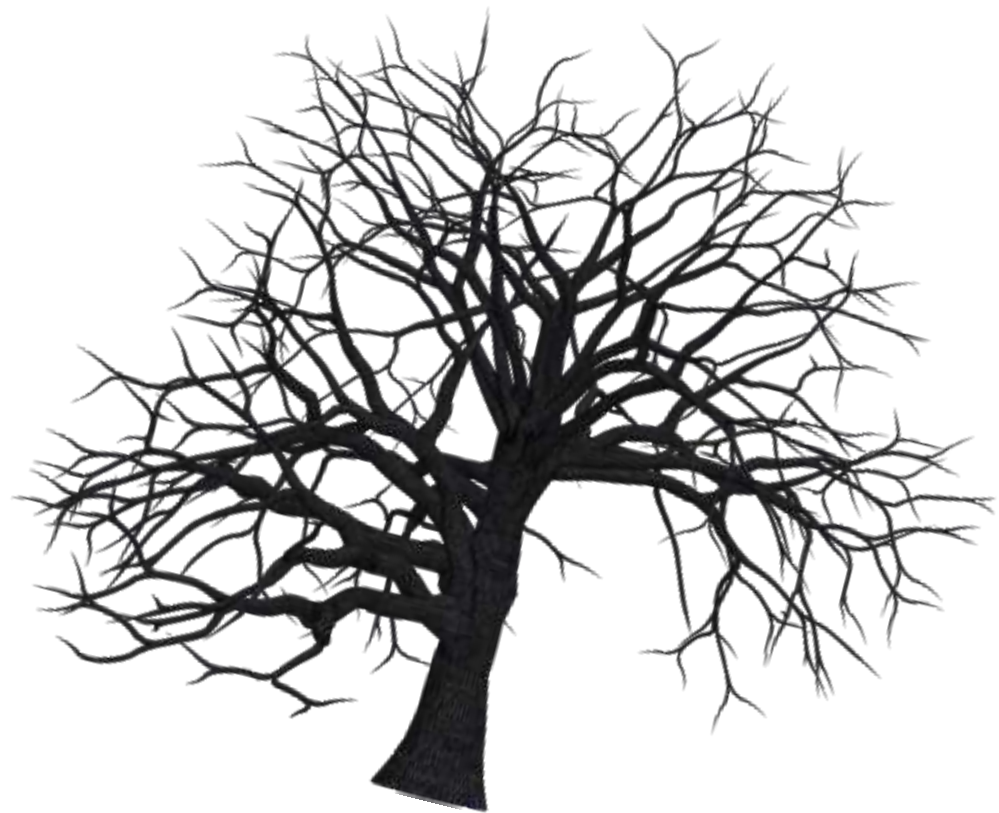
It has been our special joy to watch our children mature, marry, have children, and forge family and professional lives for themselves. Margaret and I are incredibly proud of them all. Our 13 grandchildren are a delight to watch growing up and getting to know us and us them.



Blended family in 2013



***Margaret and Gerald
in 2006***



My Story

by

Viv D



A Family Story

My name is Vivienne Davies née Layton. The story told here is my family history, starting in late eighteenth century Central Europe to the present. It has drawn on papers and photographs left by my parents, some I had not not looked at until very recently; personal memories of my own and my two brothers, Peter and George; and also painstaking research by our cousin Ariel to re-construct the family tree. Almost nothing is based on things told to me by my parents when they were still alive. The holocaust which murdered so many of their relatives and so deeply moulded their adult lives was not talked about at all at home.

Pre-war Central Europe

My parents were both born in Vienna.

My Mother's family

My mother Edith Beatrice Hecht was born 2nd January 1914. Her parents were first cousins: Viktor Hecht, a doctor 1882 -1969, and Rosa Hecht 1882-1953, a concert pianist. We have no information about Victor's family. Rosa's parents were Ludvig Hecht who died in Vienna in 1927 and Charlotte Abel. Rosa was one of six siblings, having two sisters and three brothers. I have no information about these great aunts and uncles.

Viktor had achieved some stature as the author of the Austrian standard work on treating battlefield injuries based on his experience in the First World War. After the war, in 1929, he purchased The Palace Hotel in Semmering, a fashionable ski resort some 50 miles from Vienna and converted it into a sanatorium, The Palace Sanatorium. The hotel was a substantial property built in 1912 with around 100 bedrooms and over 200 beds.



Semmering Sanatorium. My grandfather, Viktor, bought the Palace Hotel in 1929 and converted it into a sanatorium.

The Palace Sanatorium counted many prominent Viennese amongst its guests. Edith used to tell me she sat on Sigmund Freud's knee when he visited. King Farouk of Egypt was amongst its famous international guests. During the time the family lived in Semmering, the resident population was only about 1800 people and they were the only Jewish family living in the resort.

Edith was sent to a boarding school in Vienna when she was 14 years old and then on to University where she studied Languages and Psychology. She also did a finishing year where she learnt cooking, home management and various domestic skills like sewing, crocheting. She was very creative and clever with her hands.



My mother's family in Semmering in 1933. From left to right, Peter, Viktor, Rosa, Edith and Hans.

Edith had two younger brothers, Johann (Hans) Wolfgang born 19th November 1917 and Peter Gerhard Theodore, born 20th May 1919. They died within 7 weeks of each other in 1937. Hans died from TB, perhaps contracting it from patients at the sanatorium. Peter was a student at Vienna University and killed himself partly out of sorrow at his brother's death and also anxiety about the rise of Nazism and anti-Semitism which was rife in the University at this time. The brothers are buried together in Vienna.

My Father's family

My father Frederick (Freddie) Philip Löwy was born 27th December 1909, the son of Oskar and Olga. Freddie had one brother Ernst (known as Mopsy) born 18th July 1912 who went to Palestine in 1938. Mopsy married there and joined the Israeli army. He was killed (missing in action) in the Israeli War of Independence, in a tank that went over a mine on 18th July 1948, leaving his wife and a two year old son Ariel. Largely through Ariel's research over the past ten years, we know quite a lot about my father's family. He has identified all eight of our paternal great great grandparents, and for one of them has traced a further two generations going back to the 1750s.



My father Freddie driving the buggy with his brother Ernst (Mopsy) behind, around 1916 in Vienna

Oskar, my paternal grandfather, was an Engineer who was a partner in, and managed, a large engineering company in Vienna, Michelstadter. He was the son of Jacob Levy (my Great Grandfather) an official on the Railway (ein uberoofficial der Sudbahn), born in Czernowitz in Southern Bohemia on 24th March 1841. Jacob married Emilie Fein (our Great Grandmother) on 1st August 1852 in Boskowitz, Moravia. Olga, my paternal grandmother, was born in Brno in the 1880s. Her parents were Philip and Lily. I have no further information about them.



Oskar, my paternal grandfather



***Olga, my
paternal
grandmother***

My parents' early married life

My parents, Edith and Freddie, married in Vienna on the 24th March 1935. I have a copy of their Ketuba (religious marriage certificate) dated 19th Adar 5695 with their Hebrew names Jacob and Edel. From 1932 to 1938 Freddie was employed by Glasfabriken (Glass Factory) Josef Inwald A.-G in Vienna and Prague in various administrative roles, including acting as interpreter and translator for French and English.

***My mother and
father at their
wedding in Vienna,
1935***



I know from letters sent by Olga to Edith and Freddie in July 1938 that they were then living in their own apartment at Hermanova 16, in Prague 7. Peter, my eldest brother, was born in Prague 21st June 1937 presumably at that address. By August 1939 they had left their own apartment to stay with friends (the Fischers) who lived up the road at Hermanova 31, presumably in preparation for leaving the country. In 1938 Edith and Freddie took Peter to visit their parents in Vienna. That was their last visit to Vienna until many years after the War when Freddie went to visit school friends. My mother refused to visit until I was living there in the mid-1970s.

The Nazis in Vienna and Prague

Vienna

Before the start of World War 2, there were 200,000 Jews living and flourishing in Vienna. Hitler marched into Austria (the Anschluss) on 12th March 1938 and immediately began implementing the Nazi anti-Semitic policies of hate known as the Nuremberg Laws. By the beginning of 1939, some 130,000 Jews had fled to whatever country would offer refuge. My maternal grandparents, Viktor and Rosa, thankfully were amongst those who got out. My paternal grandparents, Oskar and Olga, did not.

Deportations of Jews by the Nazis started in October 1939 but the scale greatly increased from early in 1941. There were 47 transports in all, sending around 50,000 Austrian Jews to their deaths. The large majority of these deportations were from Aspeng Railway Station in Vienna's 3rd District, a central district. The large numbers of deportees, sometimes more than one thousand people a week, were deported in plain sight of the Viennese population.

Oskar and Olga

Against this background, negotiations to get a permit for Oskar and Olga to live in Britain started early in 1939 or perhaps earlier. I have a series of eight letters to various agencies dating from 14th February to 12th June 1939 relating to this application and it is clear that there were others I haven't seen. The application was based upon a proposal to start a company for oil regeneration in Britain. This was to be modelled on the Austrian company in which Oskar was a partner. The proposal was made by a Mrs Gisela Markham, the daughter of the other partner in the Vienna business, who was by then living in London, presumably married to a British man. Oskar was to be the Technical Advisor and Arnold Pressburger, the well-known film producer and a cousin of Oskar's, would be the financier. Mrs Markham was to be a research worker, a role she had undertaken in Austria for her father's company. The hope was that Oskar and Olga would get their permit by May 1939 and the proposed company seems to have initially received a positive response from the British authorities.

It is chilling to see the hoops that the application had to go through, with forms filled in duplicate and documentary evidence required. I can hardly imagine the anxiety felt by Oskar and Olga (and indeed, Freddie) as months passed without the permit being agreed. The last letter to Mrs Markham reports that the German Jewish Aid Committee had passed all the papers to an Employment Committee and that 'any further enquiries should be directed to that Committee which will doubtless communicate with you in due course'. This letter dated 12th June

1939 is the last communication I have on the matter. Presumably the Employment Committee did not 'communicate in due course'. A permit was not received and Oskar and Olga were in the second of two transportations from Aspeng Station which took place in 26th February 1941.

The two February transportations totalled 2003 Jews: men, women and children, including many doctors, lawyers, engineers and other professionals. Of that number only 28 are known to have survived. These did not include Oskar and Olga.

Opole and the Death Camps

Of course I cannot know the details of their journey from Vienna to their deaths but I do know the general story. They were first sent to Opole in Poland. Before the start of the War, 4,300 Jews, about 70% of the town's population, were living in Opole, a small town south of Lublin. The town was captured by the Germans in September 1939 and then served as a collection point for transported Jews. By the spring of 1941, the Jewish population had increased to 10,200 people and a ghetto was established in the old part of the town. It covered three acres surrounded by walls. It included only three hundred houses and there was extreme overcrowding with more than nine people to every room. Food was very short and disease was rife. Oskar and Olga would have arrived about the time the ghetto was being set up and would have been subject to all of its deprivations.

On 31st March 1942, the dissolution of the Ghetto started with a transport to Belzec Extermination Camp. This was followed by transportations to Sobibor Extermination Camp in May and October 1942. I do not know in which of these camps Oskar and Olga met their death.

Viktor and Rosa

The story of Viktor and Rosa is much happier. They had already escaped from Austria before the deportations started. The son of Viktor's gardener, though a Nazi, went to Semmering just before the Anschluss to warn Viktor of what was to come and tell them to get out whilst it was still possible. This was in recognition of kindness Viktor had shown to him and his father on his mother's death. After making arrangements to leave the country, Viktor was accused in a newspaper of having stolen money and he refused to leave until he had proved his innocence. However, given the attitude towards Jews at this time and place, the accusation resulted in his being sent to prison. The Warden of the prison happened to be a Free Mason and so was Viktor. After a short time in jail, drawing on this connection, an early release was arranged. Very soon after this, Viktor and Rosa fled to London by train in late 1938.

Prague

Edith, Freddie and Peter were back in Prague when Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia. In March 1939, Freddie lost his job at the Glass Factory because he was Jewish. The factory owner, not himself Jewish, was married to a Jewish woman who I much later met by chance in London. My parents realised they would have to leave Prague and had kept their bags packed for a quick getaway. Edith received a permit just for her and Peter to go to

England. I don't know how this was arranged but anyway she refused to leave without Freddie. His permit for England was received a little later, sponsored by a barrel maker from London's East End. He had no previous connection to Freddie and the permit was presumably organised by the Jewish Refugees Committee in London. They left Peter with friends whilst they went to queue to get their papers endorsed by the Nazi authorities and buy their train tickets. The officer who was checking papers noticed some irregularity. By chance he recognised Edith because his father had been a patient at Viktor's sanatorium and Viktor had saved his life. The officer told Edith what was needed to put the papers in order and, according to Edith, he put her in a taxi so she could go and get things sorted. She returned with the correct papers and joined Freddie in the queue. They were able to buy tickets for the last train out of Prague to London.

They went back to collect their bags and Peter. Peter remembers his small suitcase with a change of clothes, a snack and his favourite toy. They said goodbye to their friends. As they were getting on the train their luggage, including Peter's small suitcase and most of their money, was taken from them. But one of Freddie's most prized possessions, a high-end Rolliflex camera, was saved from the Nazis. Freddie managed to give it to a complete stranger through the window of the train.

It is a puzzle to me why my maternal grandparents, and my parents, were issued permits to come to Britain when my paternal grandparents, despite having financial backing to set up a significant enterprise, did not. It makes life seem like a lottery.

England

Early days

Viktor and Rosa were the first of the family to arrive in late 1938 or early 1939 (I don't know the exact date). They initially lived in London at 4 Mapesbury Road NW2 where Viktor worked at a clinic in Marylebone High Street. Soon afterwards he found a substantive post in Bradford as the Pathologist at St Luke's Hospital. He stayed in Bradford for the remainder of his life becoming a GP and joining the Reform Synagogue. His English was less than perfect but nor was that of the majority of his patients who were of Pakistani heritage. Symptoms and diagnosis were described mainly through the medium of drawings, something I learnt about from the many of that community who attended his funeral.

My parents arrived in London less than a year later in 1939. I have a letter from Olga dated August 1939, sent to them via Viktor and Rosa's address in Mapesbury Road. The Jewish Refugee Committee in London suggested they anglicize their name. My father was shown a list of suitable names and Löwy became Layton. This name change was officially registered by the Home Office Aliens Department on 31st May 1943.

They were sent to a family in Guildford, at 14 Bury Field, who were offering a temporary home for a refugee family. Peter remembers their young daughter who refused to share her toys with him. I had not been born during the time my parents were in Guildford, but this girl was to turn up some 35 years later through another of life's coincidences.

In 1972 I had my second child and Edith came down to London to help me for a few days. She answered the phone to the mother of a student of mine who wanted to know that all had gone well with the birth. Incredibly Edith recognised her voice as that of the child from Guildford. Unlikely as it is, I know this to be true.

After a short stay in Guildford, my parents and Peter were placed with a family in Godalming called Hedrill. Mr Hedrill was a manager in the Beck and Pollitzer engineering and relocation company. Again I am relying on Peter for his memories of this time. Edith did the cooking and Freddie, who had hardly been in a kitchen in his life, was the butler. Peter was left to play with the Hedrill child who was kind to him and let him ride in a pedal car. One of Freddie's first tasks was to put the oven on which he did, unfortunately without removing the cat from inside. Freddie did hear it mewling and got it out still alive. Both were equally distressed.

Despite this early misfortune, my parents seemed to have enjoyed their time in Godalming. I have a letter from Mrs Hedrill to Freddie much later fondly talking about the time she and Edith spent together when the two men were in the Services, Freddie in the Pioneer Corps and Mr Hedrill in the RAF.

Military service

Freddie was enlisted at Liverpool on 3rd March 1940 into the Pioneer Corps of the Territorials and based in Ilfracombe. His Army number was 13116188. His trade on enlistment was recorded as Butler / Clerk. His Service Book records that he was awarded his First Good Conduct Badge in October 1942, became entitled to Three Service Chevrons with effect from October 1943 and in July 1944, the month after my birth, he is recorded as proficient in grenade throwing (36 grenades thrown) and Sten Gun firing. In 1943, the Service Book records he received training in carpentry, plumbing and pipe-fitting. From 1944, he served with the Allied Expeditionary Force in France, Belgium and Germany. I have a letter he received, sent to all Allied troops, signed by Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Commander, preparing and encouraging soldiers for the task ahead of fighting the Germans in Europe. Freddie was awarded four medals for his service which are now in my possession.

In February 1946 he was transferred to the Army Reserve, giving him effective release from full time army service. In his Army Release Book, his Commanding Officer records 'Exemplary Service', that he was an effective and enthusiastic language instructor (something not recorded in his Army Service Book) and that his intelligence was far above the average. It was also recorded that he was of a quiet and studious temperament.

When Freddie was first enlisted, Edith and Peter moved to Bradford to be near her parents. However for some of the time he was serving, they moved to Marlborough to be nearer to him. Edith worked as a companion to a Mrs Piper who had large house at 39 George Lane. She and Peter lived in the gatehouse. Peter has memories of observing army manoeuvres on the nearby ranges.

Throughout their period apart, Freddie and Mopsy kept in close contact, including during the War years. We have copies of cards sent in 1945 to Mopsy and his wife Manya in Palestine, first from Belgium and later (November 1945) from Germany. The messages, written in English, are short but very sweet: 'To my very beloved brother and sister, to remember in the years ahead'.

Except for their time in Marlborough, Edith and Peter lived in various houses in and around Bradford. My brother George (in March 1942) and I (in June 1944) were both born there. Freddie came home on army passes and I remember him telling me that I was conceived on one of these visits. The same is presumably true also for George.

After Freddie was demobbed from the Services we moved to a bigger house, 48 Bertram Road Bradford. In the Pioneer Corps, Freddie had become friends with a fellow Viennese man, Kurt Gellner (who changed his name to Ken Gibson). Soon after we had moved into Bertram Road, Freddie invited Ken and his English wife Hazel and daughter Evie to share the house. The Gibsons had two more children, a daughter June and son Johnny over the time we lived together.



Freddie with Ken Gibson, a fellow refugee from Austria and a fellow soldier. Freddie invited Ken with his wife and daughter Evie to share our house in Bertram Road Bradford.

The house was a large rented property with no heating other than open coal fires in the ground floor sitting rooms and a coal range in the basement kitchen which also heated water. We lived in this large cold house as two families for a number of years. I shared a bedroom with the two girls and each couple had a double bedroom, Ken's young son sleeping in a cot with his parents. My two brothers slept in the freezing loft. Each family did their own cooking on quite minimal cookers and gas rings (by today's standards very dangerous). All the food was

stored in a very cold cellar room off the kitchen. Each family had its own kitchen table both of which are now in my house. As far as I remember we washed up separately but I think later, as we got older, we kids did it together.

I loved having two sisters for as long as it lasted. The two mothers coxed and boxed their working life around childcare and it seemed to work. Sunday night was bath night and we went in the bath, we three girls together, first. After we had got out, the boys, who were too old to share, bathed one after the other all of us using the same water. It all seemed very normal at the time. We girls went to bed at the same time and the two boys later. I have in my possession the rent book from 1957 (by which time my family lived alone) when the rent was 13 shillings and six pence per week. I don't know what the rent was in the 1940s.

Ken's family moved to Southampton to start a new life in 1950 or 1951. When writing this, I discussed the date with June Gibson and neither of us could be sure about the year.

In July 1948 Freddie received devastating news in a letter from Ernst Mandle, a friend who had gone to Palestine with Mopsy. The letter reported that Mopsy was Missing in Action in the Israel War of Independence, presumably killed. Freddie was completely dismayed to the point that he could not make himself accept the news. In a return letter to Ernst he wrote: *"I hardly can believe your news that my dearest and beloved brother should have left us ...in the absence of eyewitnesses, I still believe that our Mopsy is alive somewhere in an Arab hospital or prisoner camp. I shall not lose faith in his return."* The letter went on to express concern about Mopsy's wife Manya and son, Ariel.

So in the course of a decade, Freddie suffered the upending of his life in Europe, the loss of his possessions, the death of both his parents in extermination camps, the stress of starting a new life in England and fighting in the War, and then the death of his only brother. Yet he never complained, at least not to me, about the hand that fate had dealt him. In truth, he never talked to me about it at all.

Making ends meet

Especially after the Gibson's left, money was tight. My parents did not argue much but a couple of times I overheard heated words on how to spend the little money we had. I fondly remember my father's 'Ach, du liebe Gotte, Edith' when discussing things she had bought.

Edith worked in Dorothy Perkins fashion shop as a saleslady and soon became the manageress. She went off to work on the trolley bus very well dressed in a suit and matching shoes, hat and gloves. She had been very elegant before the war and it remained important to her. In this regard she was very unlike her mother Rosa and, it must be said, very unlike her daughter. Freddie worked at a company that manufactured plain and fancy worsteds. He was in charge of the company's exports from 1946 to 1961 when the company closed. Following that he had a few jobs in the textile sector, employed by one or other members of the Jewish community but he was never really happy in them and he retired in 1970s.

From the early 1950s, partly to help with the finances but probably more of a gesture of reconciliation, my parents linked with a local grammar school to provide board and lodging to the German Assistants who came for a school year to help with teaching as well as further their own training. There were many of these and I remember some much more than others. My then prospective husband Cyril was mistaken by Viktor for one of these. After a conversation they had together in German, Viktor commented that he was surprised that a German teacher wasn't able to speak the language better. At this time Cyril had had only a year studying technical German in his science sixth form.

The two German Assistants I remember most fondly are Heinz and Waldi.

For Edith's first visit to Germany since before the war, in the late 1960s, we (Cyril and I) drove with her to Germany, stopping at Duisburg to stay with Heinz and his parents, and then the three of us drove to Stuttgart where we put Edith on a train to go to Munich to stay at Waldi's home. In the station ticket office, the clerk heard Cyril and I talking in English and he naturally assumed Edith was English too. She told him in German where she was going and he complimented her on how well she spoke the language. That praise made her day –she was quelling.

The experience of looking after this series of young German men was almost wholly positive for my parents. But there was one terrible experience. I noticed through the open door to the German Assistant's bedroom a swastika on the wall above the fireplace. He was expelled from our house, the school and the country on that same day. Naturally my parents were very shocked but they kept faith and the assistants continued to stay for many years afterwards.

Again starting in the early 1950s, and again partly to generate some income, we had two or three paying dinner guests, all single men, and I assume all refugees, who came five nights a week. George and I would come home from school while our parents were still at work and light the two coal fires, hang up the washing and peel potatoes and vegetables. We then set the table so all was ready for our meal that evening. Edith usually prepared the meals in advance the night before or in the morning before she went to work. I think she designed the first slow cooker – she brought the rice to the boil in a large saucepan with a lid and wrapped it in the ironing blanket on the kitchen table and left it to cook whilst she was at work – it was ready to eat and still warm in the evening.

My parents' social life

These dinner guests later became close family friends forming part of what the group called 'krenschen'; I have not been able to link this with any recognised German word and I think it was made up by them. The krenschen, about seven families, met every Sunday evening for dinner taking it in turns to host. Because we had no real family, this group became my extended family; I called them aunts and uncles. Babysitting for their

children was my first source of income. Freddie and one of the group, Ernst Eckstein, built a very large model railway together in Ernst's cellar and the one night a week playing 'station master' was for Freddie, the week's highlight. Each New Year's Eve, the couples took turns to host a very lively fancy dress party. Children were not invited but I have photographs taken at these events showing the extravagance of the costumes.

My parents were very involved with the Jewish Community in Bradford. They were only the second husband and wife to each chair their sections of Bnai Brith in the same year. Edith extensively, but Freddie not at all, wrote articles and recorded broadcasts for local and national media on the experience of settling in Britain. I have just some of these. None discussed in any depth the horror of the holocaust. Beyond this, she wrote and recorded about diverse topics but often relating to fashion and training. I have a file of letters inviting her to speak, and letters of thanks.

Edith and Freddie were both instrumental in setting up twinning between Bradford and Moenchenglbadach. Started in 1971 it is still in place. The twinning and the subsequent visits and friendships were for them another landmark in moving on from the Holocaust.

Although quite unlikely Tory supporters, both parents loyally, and to the despair of their children, consistently voted Conservative at General Elections. The Tories were seen as the true representative of Britain, the country that had welcomed them in their need.

School and Beyond

Peter and George went to the local Primary School, Lilycroft, and then on to the nearby boys grammar school, Belle Vue. I started at the same primary school overlapping for several years with George.



Outside Bertram Road. Edith holding me with George and Peter next to her.

Peter left school at 16 years old and went to work for a friend of our father's, Ernst Hochwald. He had a warehouse which collected and prepared old fabrics for re-use, cutting them into small rags – an early form of re-cycling. Peter remembers managing a team of women in a very dusty, unhealthy environment. Ernst had no son and had recruited Peter with the thought that he might stay for the long term, perhaps marrying Ruth, his elder daughter and taking over the business.

I had always thought Ernst must be related to us as he looked so much like Freddie but I don't think either man was aware of any family relationship at the time. Very much later, as a result of Ariel's research into family history, we discovered that they shared the same great grandparents who had thirteen children. Freddie and Ernst spring from different siblings of the thirteen.

I was nine when Peter started work and I got up at 6am every morning to make breakfast for him before he went to work. On Sunday mornings all three of us (Peter, George and I) attended Sunday school at the orthodox synagogue in Spring Gardens, the place where years later I was married. Although our family were members, there was a minimum of religious observation at home and no kashrut. A morning none of the three of us will forget is when I was asked by our teacher, Mr Gollam, to explain to the class what I meant by 'brunch'. Peter and George were already squirming in anticipation of my answer: bacon and eggs.

On Sunday afternoons, Peter and I attended Habonim, a Zionist, Socialist Youth Group which met in the same synagogue school rooms. After a year or so in his job, Peter was called up for his National Service and joined the RAF. Throughout his military service, Peter retained contact with Habonim. Over his time in the RAF, from 1956 to 1958, Ernst payed him a retainer of £2.10p a week. On his return to civilian life, Peter felt an obligation to return to the job and worked for a further year. He then, through Habonim, went to Israel on a Youth Leadership course, Machon. He spent a year there and 'discovered art'. On his return, he enrolled at the Bradford School of Art for two years and then on to the Central School of Art in London where he studied ceramics. He later switched to glass achieving worldwide celebrity and founding London Glassblowing. Amongst the recognitions of his contribution to studio glass, he was elected to the Worshipful Company of Glaziers and made a Freeman of the City. This provides him with the right to take his sheep over London Bridge, something most of us cannot even contemplate.

George had his first role in a school play at the primary school where he played Puck in *Midsummers Night's Dream*. Edith made his costume out of our living room curtains. He was a great success and from then on always knew what he wanted to do. He was very determined to go to drama school though our parents were insistent that he should finish school first. He went on to RADA (Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts) in London with a grant from Bradford Education Department. He won the Emile Littler award at RADA (Albert Finney was an earlier recipient). As well as acting he started writing and has had many successful TV programmes and films to his credit. He is also the author of three anthologies of children's stories, *Northern Childhood: The Fib; The Swap and The Trick*. These have been included in the National Curriculum for 12 to 14 year olds and

translated into many languages. George still regularly reads them at primary schools in Bradford and nationwide.

The work of both Peter and George was recognised by Bradford University, First George was awarded Doctor of Letters in 2000 for achievements in writing and the theatre. A few years later Peter received the same honour this time for his contribution to art.

And then there is me

School life and anti-Semitism

Unlike my brothers who were able to attend a local boy's grammar school, there was no local girls' equivalent for me other than a Catholic school that I didn't want to go to. I passed the exams to be accepted into the well regarded Bradford Girls Grammar School but without a scholarship, it was out of the question that I could accept the place offered. Instead, I enrolled at the Bolling Girls Grammar School on the other side of Bradford. It turned out to be an unfortunate choice. I was the only Jewish girl out of 400 students and suffered a lot of abuse and anti- Semitism. An occasion I especially remember is when other girls looked in my hair searching for horns. This started because in my first term, I took a day off for the Jewish New Year, something my teacher recorded in the class register. I tried to erase this and was rebuked in front of my class and sent to the Headmistress. I received only further rebuke, and no support, from her. I just suffered in silence and did not tell my parents or anyone else at the time.

This was all brought back to me very recently when I was asked by one of my grandchildren, 'who was your best friend at school?'. I got out my class photo, looked at it and realised I did not have one. I broke down when this memory came back to me.

Something that amuses me in retrospect, though not at the time, is that I was not allowed by the German mistress to attend her class. She spoke the language as if she had never been out of Yorkshire (and probably hadn't) but was very critical of my poor accent. German was my language at home and I took the exams without help from the school, of course passing with flying colours. But my accent was indeed Wienerish, not Hoch Deutsch, and my attitude perhaps less than perfect.

Despite the adverse environment, I had high achievement across all subjects and went on to study at Leeds Metropolitan University, now Leeds Beckett University, for a National Diploma in Hotel Keeping and Catering. The course encompassed a range of subjects from catering, management, law, economics, accounting, as well as waiting at table.

And do not shed tears for my lack of friends at school. I had many local friends and we often played in the street and the back alley. But friends made through Habonim were the most important to me, in Bradford and nationally. Many remain amongst my closest friends.

Courtship and Marriage

I married Cyril Davies on 12th September 1965. We were married at the orthodox synagogue in Bradford, the synagogue of which my parents were members



***My Wedding,
Bradford
September
1965***

Although he has only one sister, Ruth, Cyril is part of a large Manchester-based extended family with many cousins, something I had yearned for. His great grandparents had all emigrated from Eastern Europe early in the 20th Century and all of his grandparents were born in England. His family history requires its own long testament which I will not try to address here.

I first met Cyril in December 1961 at a Habonim activity in Carmarthen. For much of our relationship between 1961 and 1964, Cyril and I lived in different cities whilst studying, he in London and I in Bradford. We had no access then to the plethora of electronic communications available today. Even telephones were less common

and expensive for inter-city calls. So letter writing was the main means of keeping in contact. Cyril was a prolific writer, his letters being both romantic and informative. I still have some of them after 55 years. They were written almost exclusively while he was sitting in a lecture theatre at University.

We both graduated in 1964. After graduating, Cyril spent six months at the David Eder Farm in Sussex. This was a facility linked to Habonim which prepared groups for a life in Israel. We were both part of a group intending to settle on Kibbutz Amiad. I moved to London to be nearer to Cyril.

After Cyril left the Farm and returned to London, we moved into a flat together with Peter and George until we married. Soon after marrying we went to Israel for six months, staying at Kibbutz Amiad. The visit was a trial for the possibility of moving to Kibbutz. But we came home to London. We have no regrets about this decision although we retain close links to dear friends living in Israel on kibbutz and in cities.

We moved into a rented flat in King Henrys Road, Swiss Cottage. Soon after, there was a large scale redevelopment in the area and the beautiful Victorian houses were demolished to make way for the ugly council tower blocks and uglier white box private houses that are there today. However it was this that enabled us, without any capital or savings, to get on the housing ladder. Because we were being made homeless, we qualified for a 100% mortgage from Camden Council and managed to buy our own flat in Haverstock Hill for £5,000. This is where our eldest child Joby was born.

My early career

I worked in catering management for several years. Within six weeks of the start of my first job, my boss fell ill and I became responsible for a large staff providing several thousand meals a day for the Post Office. I was the first in our marriage to earn over £1,000 a year. Much of my following career has been in the education sector, particularly working with people with special needs. In 1969, as a teacher in Haverstock Comprehensive School, I set up the model for what was to become Breakfast Clubs in schools.

Back to Vienna

In the mid-1970s, I moved with Cyril and two children (by this time Jemma had been born) to live in Vienna where he was a Visiting Scholar at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IASA). It was the only time as an adult, until retirement, that I haven't worked. We were the only British family at IASA but we made many international friends and it was a very happy time. Few of my parents' friends remained in Vienna so there was minimal family connection. By extraordinary coincidence, the first time I travelled on the tramway, a lady sitting next to me heard me talking to my children in English and just said 'Hello'. In the conversation which ensued, in German, it transpired that she had been a patient at my grandfather's

sanatorium. While we were living in Vienna, my mother made her first visit to the city since leaving it before the war. My father had returned a few times previously.

My dream job

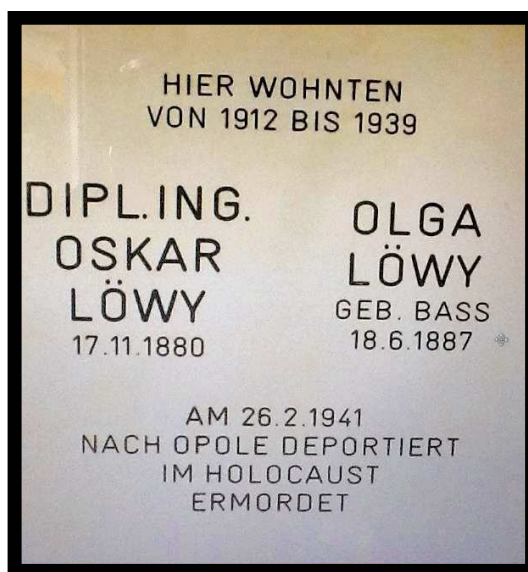
On returning to London I started what was to become my dream job working for The Camden Society for People with Learning Difficulties, initially as Organiser of Volunteers. Later I created the first training, then employment, service in this type of organisation. I set up a Café Training project using all the skills I had learnt from my course. I found sources of funding, a pub giving away tables and chairs, and from Bedford College which was closing down, we fitted out the kitchen. A cork tile manufacturer donated off cuts plus the glue to lay the tiles. We linked with a local youth project that brought their students in free of charge to teach them painting and decorating skills and floor laying. I found a backer to fund two salaries and promote us. As another first, I persuaded a till manufacturer to design a cash register with pictures on the keys that matched the menu. This was just the first of several projects. I created and found funding (often from the EU) for similar projects related to training for Catering, Gardening, Office Skills, Mailing and Warehousing skills and in parallel, set up an Employment Service to place and support students in employment. These projects were the first of their kind in the UK, and perhaps in the world. To the best of my knowledge most of the projects are still running many years after they started. They have been widely copied, nationally and internationally.

In recognition of my work with The Camden Society, I was proud to become MBE in 2004.

Modern Times

Vienna again

***The Stolperstein
commemorating my
paternal
grandfather Oskar,
Vienna 2006***



On my last visit to Vienna in 2006, I went with my brothers, cousin Ariel and our partners, to celebrate the laying of a 'stolperstein' (stumbling stone) commemorating where and when my paternal grandparents, Oskar and Olga, had lived in Vienna's Fourth District at 27/10 Starhembergasse between 1912 and 1939. The

tradition of laying these small sett sized plaques in the pavement had started some years earlier in Berlin as a memorial to those who had perished in the Holocaust. We were part of just the second group of stolpersteins laid outside of Germany.

Between July 1939 and February 1941, the were moved by the Nazi authorities into three different apartments in the area before finally being deported to Opole.

We visited Vienna's main cemetery (Zentral Friedhof) to find the graves of Freddie's grandparents, Jacob Löwy and Emilie Fein. The cemetery plan recorded where they were buried but the spot was overgrown with bushes. With the help of some workmen, we managed to clear the bushes and resurrect the stones almost one hundred years after they were buried.

We took the train to Semmering and visited the hotel that had been my grandfather Viktor's sanatorium. Although the hotel staff had no knowledge or records about the hotel's history, my husband found a quite prominent display in a corner of the reception area setting out the history and mentioning the period when it had been a sanatorium run by Dr Viktor Hecht.

Growth of our London based family

Since the 1960s my, and my brothers', families have been living in London. By the early 1980s, we had between us eight children: in order of age, Tristan, Joby, Jemma, Claudie, Bart, Josh, Danny and Jamie. The four 'Jays' are my children.

My frequent telephone calls around this time to my mother in Bradford followed a familiar pattern, starting with a report of which of her friends had died. There was nothing sinister about this, merely a reflection of age. Then there was discussion about the grandchildren. With each death the attraction to her of Bradford grew a little less, and with each birth, the attraction of London grew stronger.

In 1984, Edith and Freddie moved to London, into a small but delightful house very near me in Muswell Hill. Over the move Edith insisted that nothing could be thrown away and the much smaller London house was over filled with clothes and shoes that would never again be worn and with old, blown cans of food that would be toxic if ever anyone tried to eat the contents. She justified this insistence on retaining everything as a product of her refugee experience when everything had been lost.

They had a very happy time in London regularly seeing their children and grandchildren, three of whom were born after they arrived: Hannah, Ben and Sophie, bringing the total to 11. Freddie died on the 10th October 1990. Edith died twenty one months later on the 21st July 1992.

This was the end of a generation but a new generation was well underway.

Cyril and I have now eight grandchildren, in order of age: Sebastian, Freddie, Benjamin, Lottie, Rosie, Millie, Sunny and Lila. This number may perhaps grow. George and Moya have three: Theo, Felix and Edith and a fourth on the way. Peter and Ann have so far got three, Bart's children, Tessa, Carmen and Sasha. Ben and Sophie don't yet have children.

The extended family is remarkably close. My children and their first cousins are in contact, seeing each other regularly. All of them save Tristan live in London; he has lived in the US for many years but keeps in touch. We have family get-togethers, meals and parties, typically involving twenty or more, for birthdays and other celebrations. For Bonfire Night and Christmas and Boxing Day, the numbers are often above thirty.

What a change from my growing up. From drought to abundance.

The Jewish Connection

Being Jewish has throughout my early and married life been an important part of my self-identity and the same is true for Cyril who was brought up in a conventionally orthodox family in Manchester. But being Jewish does not preclude our also being atheist.

For a number of years we were members of Alyth Gardens Reform Synagogue. We joined for two reasons: one to show solidarity with my sister in law Moya (George's wife) who was converting to Judaism through that schul. And two because Josh wanted to go to a Jewish school (JFS), itself a result of our having a young cousin from Cyril's side of the family stay with us for six months while her parents were in the USA. Josh rather idolised this cousin, Kim, and she was attending JFS. He also fancied the school term in Israel that came with attendance.

Our three sons were all bar mitzvah, two (Josh and Jamie) at Alyth Gardens and Joby between school and university when he spent a year in Israel and travelling.

Only one of our four children is married to a Jewish partner: Josh to Zoe. They had been going out together for six months or more when a friend of mine observed how nice it was for me that he had a Jewish girlfriend. I did not know this and was surprised. More surprisingly, neither did Josh or Zoe know it of the other. Of the other partners, Joby is married to an Australian, Libby, who was brought up as a Catholic; Jemma to Marcus whose family can trace their roots through tens of generations in England, presumably C of E; and Jamie to Liz whose family presumably are Christian but this has never been discussed in conversations with her parents. It has not been seen as important.

None of our children practice any religion and I believe the same is true for Peter and George's children. But despite this, the feeling that they are Jewish (some are according to law, some not) is important to them. We take the easy route to encourage this: Friday night dinners, seders at Pesach, and lights and presents at Chanuka (celebrated hand in hand with Christmas).

Stimulated by Libby, in October 2018 twelve of us went to Israel for the bar mitzvah of my three eldest grandsons, Sebby, Freddie and Benny. This was celebrated in Jerusalem at The Wall. Initially I thought it might be difficult to find a rabbi to conduct a service. In fact we found one very much after our own heart, Rabbi Nardy Grun. He was ordained through the Congregation for Humanist Judaism, a group that has a yeshivot in Jerusalem and the US, and believes that Judaism should be defined by culture and heritage rather than theology.



The Bar Mitzva of my three eldest grandsons Jerusalem 2018

The boys were each required to write and deliver a piece setting out what being Jewish meant to them. What they wrote was very moving, emphasising the importance each felt about being Jewish and those things about Judaism that were most important to them. None of the speeches dwelt heavily on Jewish philosophy. They were mainly about family closeness and caring, food, language, celebrations and the like. And anti-Semitism concerned each of them.

The plan was that the experience would be repeated this October, taking the older granddaughters, Lottie and Rosie, and perhaps including Bart's daughters, Tessa and Carmen. Instead we have Covid 19.

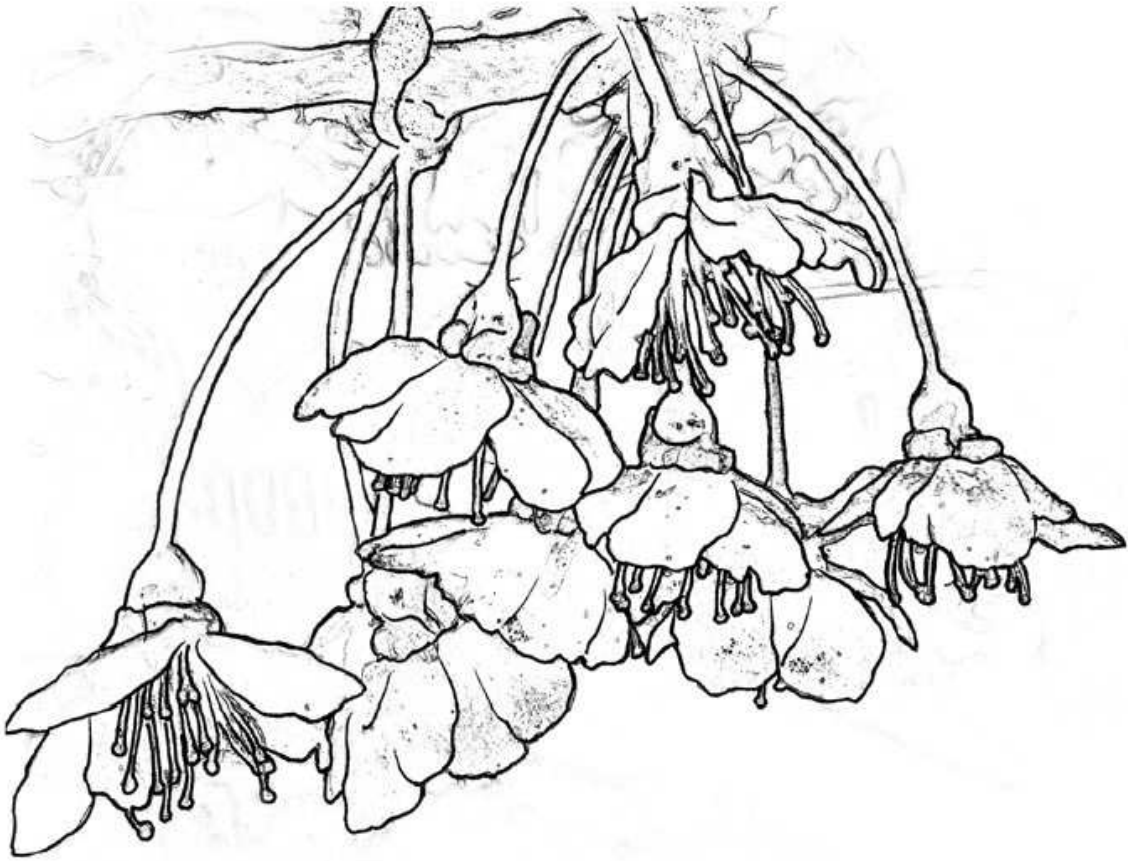
But even in lockdown, celebration continues. Each Friday night my four children and their families take turns to

light the candles, brought together courtesy of Zoom. I must mention our younger grandchildren who have not yet appeared in the story. Millie and Sunny take an active role in this service. But the youngest Lila, who is just one, remains a rather passive participant.

So being Jewish, which brought the near extermination of my family, continues down the generations. But for how long this increasingly diluted form of Judaism is sustainable, only time will tell.

Vivienne Marguerite Ruth Davies

London July 2020



Wild cherry

My Story

by

Ivor D



Ich bin ein Berliner – Nicht!

Aber einige meiner besten Freunde sind 'Yekkers'!

by Ivor Davies

PROLOGUE

Being the grandchild of turn-of-the-century (ie.c.1900) immigrants from Poland and Lithuania (both designated as part of Russia at the time), I was spared the horrific traumas endured by 'WW2' immigrants from Germany/Austria and their offspring. Not to say that I was spared all issues; being the 'only Jew' in a school, in a university class and at work, brought their own measures of unease – however, to be fair to those who really suffered, my experiences were perhaps no more than discomfort. My ancestors suffered, but I didn't. However, let's start the story with the family background.

The TOBIASZ dynasty

My maternal grandfather, Abraham (Abe) Tobias (nee Tobiasz, d.o.b 1892), was born in Ostralenka, Poland (part of Russia at the time) in 1892, the oldest of three children. Two of my distant cousins, who happen to be genealogists, have traced the family back to Abe's great-grandfather Szymek Tobiasz (1780-1848). So far, they have discovered over 300 descendants world-wide (an 'R' factor of 3+ in 'coronavirus' terms!). According to his death certificate (he died a pauper), Szymek's occupation was listed as that of a 'Teacher of Jewish children'. At some stage down the line, I believe the family became 'blacksmiths', a prospect which seemingly did not attract grandfather Abe. Hence in 1913 aged 21, he emigrated to the UK, first making his way to Glasgow where he stayed with an uncle and became a 'tailor's machinist', working for a 'Goodman'. In 1916 he moved to Manchester and in 1917 he married my grandmother Sarah Goodman (some coincidence?) in the Roumanian Synagogue. They settled in the Lower Broughton 'ghetto' adjacent to Strangeways Jail and, subsequently, had three children, Harold, Phyllis (my mother), and Reuben.

Sarah (d.o.b 1891) was not a well person; apparently, she was of a very nervous disposition (thyroid problems were prevalent in the family) and died in 1946. I was 3 yrs.old at the time; regrettably, I have no significant memory of her. Six months later Abe re-married, to Rachel Barrabas (thereafter known as 'Auntie Ray'), incurring the wrath of the family, particularly that of Mum, primarily for the reason of Abe's haste – re-marrying after such a short period of time was contrary to Jewish tradition; but then grandfather Abe needed someone to wash his socks and make his chopped liver (not necessarily in that order!). As it happens, 'Auntie Ray' was a delightful step-grandmother whom all in the family grew to love; and their house was a great place for a snack-break when walking home from school – her chocolate cake was out of this world!

Abe had 2 brothers (Isaac and David) and a sister (Naomi? Was there a 3rd brother, Mordechai?). Isaac left Ostralenka about 1920 and emigrated to South Africa. Isaac and Abe exchanged letters in Yiddish for 35-40 years before Isaac (just before he died) sent a ticket for Abe to visit him in Johannesburg in the late 1950s, where Abe stayed for 2 months, some 6 weeks beyond his original intention.

Auntie Ray was tearing her hair out with worry because Abe somehow forgot to tell her about his extended

'holiday'. He'd decided to help out Isaac's son, Jack, by working in his clothing factory; of course, nothing to do with the luxurious lifestyle that he'd encountered!. Eventually he decided to return home, with painted toenails which, with typical egocentricity, he thought enhanced his stature (he was only 4'11"! Clearly, born 100 years before his time).

We have made the connection with Isaac's family, his son Jack (now deceased) and Jack's 3 sisters. In particular we have become close friends with Jack's offspring, Karen, who now lives in Los Angeles, her sister Nadine in Vancouver and brother Stanley in Long Island NY, all my 2nd cousins. While in South Africa, Abe learned that his cousins (the Blacovich family of his mother Sora) had managed to get from Poland to Palestine/Israel in the 1920s – he subsequently visited them in 1960 and left me with details of this family, whom I also visited and befriended in 1969 (in particular the Shabtai family of Kibbutz Beit Oren).

Abe and Isaac lost contact with their mother and sister who, in the run-up to WW2, perished at the hands of fascists. They believed the same fate had befallen their brother David but, we have since discovered, he got married, joined the Russian army in the 1920s and 'went east'. He was killed by the Germans in WW2 but his son (and family) survived and lived in Ukraine. David's granddaughter Zina (another 2nd cousin!) was amongst the first wave of Russian immigrants into Israel in the 1990s. Some 10-12 years later we made contact with her in Haifa and introduced her to her Israeli cousins – she had really thought she had no family.

Meanwhile, back in Manchester; we seem to know little about my grandmother Sarah's ancestry beyond her parents, Chiam and Freda (nee Greenberg), except that they also originated in Poland/Russia. Sarah had an older sister Ettie who, together with her family (4 daughters and son, Meyer) emigrated from Manchester to the USA in the 1920s. My Mum and her brother Harold maintained contact with all of Ettie's daughters and, since then, I have picked up the mantle with Ettie's grandchildren, my second-cousins, particularly with (the late) Norma Spungen (Chicago and NYC), Bob Silverstein and Ellen Haake (both Chicago), whom we meet often. I met Meyer's family in Long Island in 1974, but have now lost touch.

Grandfather Abe passed away in 1968, aged 75, and Auntie Ray died not long afterwards.



Grandfather, Abraham Tobias



Great Grandmother, Sora Tobiasz (nee Blacovich) with Naomi & Mordechai?



Auntie Ray with Grandfather Abraham

MIKELESZATSKI, -ETSKI, -SHATSKI (who knows?), KLEIMAN and DAVIES

My paternal grandparents, Israel Mikeleszatski* and Dora Kleiman immigrated to Manchester in 1900 (aged 20 and 17 respectively) from Kalvarija in the Suvalki region of Lithuania (then, also part of Russia); somehow making their way through hostile territory to the port of Gdansk in Poland, from where they managed to board a ship to Hull. The romantics among the family would have us believe that they had eloped; the realists knew that they left behind families (tenant farm-smallholders) in destitute conditions, regularly beaten by Cossacks and other antisemitic thugs. Israel had a sister (Annie) who reputedly emigrated to the USA (not to be heard from again) and a second sister who came to live in London (her descendants, the Romoff family lived in Kew), but there has been no contact since the 1960s.

**During a research trip to Lithuania, my older son (Adam) discovered that 'Mikeleszatski' is derived from the hamlet Miklausa near Kalvarija. In the early 1800s, Lithuanians were obliged to adopt a surname; many taking on board the name of the place where they lived and adding the letters 'atski/etski/shatski', meaning 'from'.*

One of grandmother Dora's brothers also managed to get to Manchester, and a strong connection with his offspring has been maintained to this present day. At some stage the remainder of Dora's family subsequently moved from Kalvarija to the relative safety of Marijampole and, although some contact was maintained for a few years, eventually those of both the Mikeleszatski and Kleiman families who'd remained in Lithuania perished (we believe) in horrific circumstances.

My parents never talked about this and I regret that I never had the inquisitiveness to ask. What I now know has emerged from research carried out by various cousins, two of whom happen to be genealogists (brothers Alan & Michael Tobias), and my son, Adam; and I shall be forever indebted to them for explaining whence I came! No-one yet has told me to where I'm going, albeit several suggestions have been made!

Meanwhile, in an attempt to appear more Anglicised prior to joining the army regiment, the Lancashire Fusiliers, Israel shortened his surname from 'Mikeleszatski' to 'Davies'! No-one in the family could offer an explanation, other than that the Immigration Authorities 'donated' the name 'Davies' as a result of their failure to understand Israel's Yiddish and his failure to speak English.

From FARMING to PRESSING

There being few opportunities for his farming skills in Manchester, Israel opted to become a tailor's presser, and Dora became a full-time mother, bearing 8 children at 15-month intervals from 1903; namely Sadie (Sarah), Chick (Saul), Joe (Joseph), Ginger (Louis), Chaik (Jane, aka Jean), my dad (Mick), Riv (Rene) and Inky (Harry). Dad was born in 1913, the 6th of the 8, some of whom (Sadie, Mick, Riv and Inky) became staunch left-wingers, the rest getting out of the neighbourhood as quickly as they could.

There was never any money in either the Davies or Tobias family. 'Business' was almost a dirty word, ascribed to those who had either inherited wealth or who were 'lucky' to be at the right place at the right time, or who were 'ganevim'! None of that generation had any tangible assets; no-one owned their own home – renting was the norm. Nevertheless, education was seen to be the key to the emergence from poverty – my father, Michael, followed his older brother, Joe, into Salford Grammar school and, while subsequently working in the petroleum industry, he

succeeded in studying part-time to get his Chemistry degree.

In 1940, grandfather Israel died of peritonitis, as a result of acute appendicitis and his failure to seek medical aid, since that would have meant taking time off work (there was no NHS and 'sickpay' was not on offer in those days!). In November of that year, my parents got married and held their honeymoon on the Isle of Man where, coincidentally, some of the fathers of our 'Yekker' friends were incarcerated in detention camps as 'Enemy Aliens' from May 1940. There is no indication whether my parents interacted with these 'aliens'.

Grandmother Dora lived with my father's sister, Sadie (and husband, Sol), bringing up my cousins Ian and Michael while Sadie worked full-time. Dora died in her 90s.



**Grandfather, Israel Mikeleszatski/
Davies**



**Grandmother Dora
Davies, with Mum
& Dad, myself and
cousin Ian; 1953**

INDUSTRIAL RIGHTS and LEFT-WING POLITICS

After WW2, Dad's career progressed as an industrial chemist, specialising in adhesives and mastics. Working life wasn't plain sailing, however. From one Manchester chemical factory, Dad came home with not a few bruises, incurred repelling an anti-Semitic attack, an event ultimately resulting in both Dad and his assailant getting sacked. Following a spell on the dole, he took a temporary lecturing job in Sheffield, to which he commuted twice a week by motorbike over the Pennines. However, soon afterwards he returned to his industrial roots and, in the early 1950s he developed the technology for sticking plastic dashboards to the metal frames of cars; and engineered the mastics for bonding concrete to metal and plastics for the construction industry.

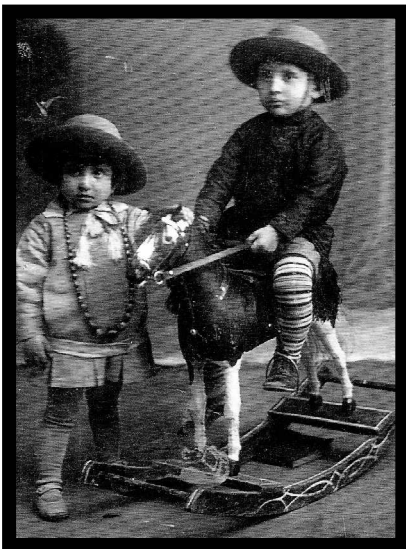
Ultimately, he became widely recognised in industry for his technical prowess. But by the late 1950s and 60s, companies for whom he worked were successively bought out - twice this happened - thereby losing control over the technologies he'd developed. Had Dad had any entrepreneurial flair he could, perhaps should, have started his own business; but for him that would have been a step too far. By 1968, at the age of 58, he'd had enough of industrial 'rationalisation' policies; he changed tacks completely and became a schoolteacher.

Mum had left school when 14 and went straight into a factory. She and her two brothers all worked in the clothing industry (skilled work but with incommensurate pay), a job she stuck to right through until I was 14. Incidentally, she had a great voice and, by all accounts, could (perhaps should) have become an opera singer. But that was a 'luxury' the family couldn't afford.

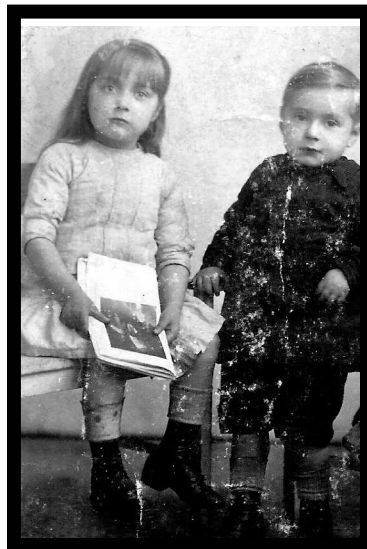
Eventually, in 1957, Mum tired of the noise of the sewing machines, the lousy pay and the grotty working conditions in the sweatshops; and took a job on the shop floor for Woolworths, then Boots and eventually moved into clerical work for an insurance company.

In their earlier years in Manchester, Mum (partially) and Dad (wholly) embraced a long-standing Jewish tradition – they were ardent Communists! Most of their friends were also ardent Communists and...er...secular Jewish. Much of our family social life was spent in left-wing circles, a major highlight being the annual Daily Worker Bazaar in the Manchester Lesser Free Trade Hall. Who could ask for anything more?

In post-war boom years, such leanings went out of fashion, and that traditional element of their social life diminished, influenced also by their frequent removal (for Dad's work) to other parts of the country; to Chester, Dudley (near Birmingham), Rainhill (near Liverpool), and Haltwhistle (Northumberland). And despite frequent returns to Manchester (Crumpsall, Cheadle Hulme), the nomadic provincial life with my parents was such that I learned very quickly how to survive as a member of an ethnic, and political, minority – of just 3!



**Mum (Phyllis, standing)
with brother Harold
(Chalk)**



**Father Michael (Mick)
and his sister Jean
(Chalk)**



**Mum & Dad's
wedding photo**

THE LATCH-KEY KID, and knowing your RIGHT from your LEFT

I arrived on the scene in 1943. From the age of about 7, I was a 'latch-key' kid, growing up with an element of independence, albeit I often had to run home from school or to the security of Auntie Ray's house to escape the threatening attentions of the 'ruffians' from the local Catholic school. I had no siblings but several cousins of similar age, with whom I still have strong ties (particularly with cousins Ian and Sharon who still reside in Manchester, with Liz in Cookham), and we often stayed in each other's houses.

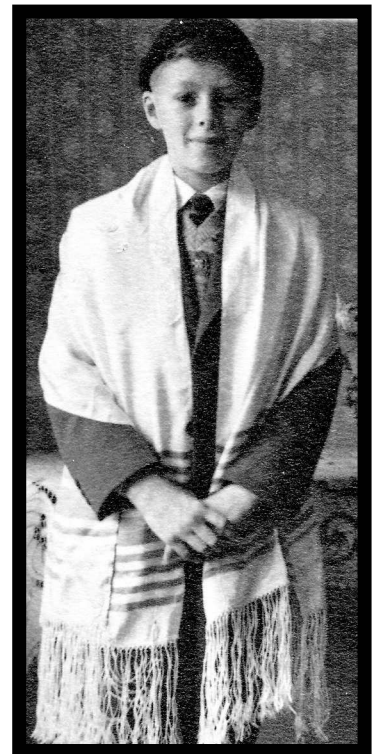
After leaving primary school in 1954, I went to Bury Grammar where there were several Jewish pupils. We all persuaded our parents to write to the head to be excused from the traditional C of E morning assembly, thereby giving us a free period in which to compare homework and to discuss the latest football news. However, when one of the teachers (Jewish; shame on him!) was delegated to use that period as an Old Testament scripture lesson – enough already; we opted back into the regular assembly!

Another penalty for being Jewish was that immediately after my barmitzvah (1956) at Manchester's Central Synagogue, all my Jewish mates zoomed off to watch City (or maybe it was United) play their Saturday league match, while I suffered the indignity of having my cheeks pinched (kin-a-hora) all afternoon by relatives that I didn't know!

Also in 1956, my parents experienced a significant change in their lifestyles – less to do with my *barmitzvah*, more to do with the invasion of Hungary by the Russians, which sparked my parents' divorce from far-left politics. By this time, our daily dose of the Daily Worker/Morning Star had been supplemented by The Guardian; and by 1966 when Judy and I got married, Dad had changed career from being an industrial scientist to that of a teacher; and Mum had exchanged her job of clothing-factory machinist for healthier employment as a shop assistant and then clerical officer.



**Me, at 12
months**



**My
barmitzvah**

GRIDLOCK to WEDLOCK

In 1957, because of my Dad's new job in St.Helens, we moved from Manchester to Rainhill near Liverpool. Rainhill was famous for having hosted trials of Stephenson's Rocket and for its (in)famous mental hospital – a common source of fun-poking. Not a Jew in sight; nor were there at my new school, Prescot Grammar. I suspect that no-one in the school knew I was Jewish, and I didn't advertise the fact. I wasn't aware of any antisemitic remarks made in my direction, but the derogatory use of 'Jew' was not uncommon.

I was not at all religious/observant, but now living in a clearly non-Jewish environment, having left friends and cousins behind in Manchester, I felt somewhat gridlocked in this unfamiliar Merseyside setting. Spiritually I had never left Manchester; I coped OK, but after a couple of years, I started visiting Manchester on weekends. My teenage social life began to take off and, after playing football for my school on Saturday mornings, I would rush to get the bus or train for the 26 mile journey to my 'home town' (usually staying at my cousin Ian's), hopefully in time for City's match; to be followed by a Saturday night party, then playing a Sunday morning football match in the Northern Jewish Soccer League, and a late Sunday evening train back to Rainhill; truly knackered! Needless to say, much of Monday in school was spent half-asleep with the attendant risk to my educational aspirations – hence I struggled perhaps more than necessary to get my 4 'A' levels.

I don't know whether my parents were disappointed in my rejecting the offer from Manchester University to study mathematics, my preference being for the less prestigious Keele University which, in its then-compulsory 4-year internment, provided opportunities to study a wide range of subjects in addition to the main degree courses. My prime subjects were Maths and Economics, but my subsidiaries were Moral & Political Philosophy, Classical Greek and Latin Literature, Chemistry and Geography. I got a good degree, but I'm not sure that much of the content remained embedded in my mind and skill-set - unlike sport, which gave me opportunities to represent Keele at football, athletics and tennis during my 1961-5 tenure. I think that my parents were proud of my achievements – although my Dad was prone to exaggerate my athletic status (my being offered terms by Manchester City was totally untrue!).

In 1964, while I was waiting for my final year at Keele to commence, cousin Ian (who by then had become the leader of the JLB Youth Club in Manchester) called me to ask if I would like to join him and a group of youth leaders on their weekend trip to Oxford – they would be passing Keele on the M6 in their minibus and could easily pick me up en route. Notwithstanding my scepticism about their objective (attending the Annual Meeting of the National Association of Christians and Jews, at Ruskin College – but could be a 'jolly' nevertheless), I agreed. Amongst the group in the minibus was Judy Wolfson, a Cardiffian, who was training to be a youth leader at Westhill College, Birmingham University and who was on secondment to Ian's JLB Club, as her field-work assignment. To cut a long story short, Judy and I got married in Cardiff in August 1966. Cousin Ian has a lot to answer for!

After leaving University and before Judy and I got married, I shared a flat (comprising just one and a half rooms) with my friend Mike Cantor, also an ex-Keelite, in Narcissus Road, West Hampstead – it cost us £2 and 10 shillings each per week. Life there was a hoot. Mike (at the time a lecturer at Willesden Poly) was a talented guy with a great sense of humour, but a little bit lacking in some life-skills. One memorable evening, he decided to grill some sausages in our little Belling stove. We were chatting when he suddenly remembered the sausages – the smell of burning was perhaps a clue! He rushed to open the door of the Belling and grabbed the grill plate supporting the sausages; but such was his haste, he had forgotten to don the oven-gloves! He burnt his fingers, dropped the grill plate and sausages on to the floor; and, then, while

sucking his charred digits, but having completely forgotten that he had earlier removed his shoes and socks, managed to stand on the still red-hot grill plate. The sizzling flesh (the grill-plate stripes on the sole of his foot were there to be seen many years later) adding a delicate aroma to the smoke-filled room, while I was on my knees in a failed attempt to recover the sausages which, by this time, had rolled under the kitchen cupboard. A Brian Rix farce could not have displayed this scene any better!

That was one of a succession experiences (other burning issues, mishaps - Mike had a succession of female visitors which occasionally lead to me being either locked-out or locked-in!) from which I escaped to the prospect of a stable and more romantic life with Judy!



***Our
Wedding;
1966***

NORTH-WEST v. NORTH-EAST

By this time, Judy was living in rented rooms in Belsize Grove NW3 before moving to less expensive premises in Golders Green Road, NW11, which she shared with several other girls and the owner, Mrs Silver. One winter night that I was staying there surreptitiously, we had lit the paraffin heater in the bathroom. In the middle of the night we woke up to the smell of burning; we had forgotten to turn off the heater; the paraffin had run out and the wick was burning, issuing filthy black smoke which had stained the walls and ceiling. It took Judy and I the rest of the night to wash down and clean the whole bathroom and to return it to pristine (well, almost) condition before leaving for work. After I had crept out at 7.00am, Mrs Silver accosted Judy with the suggestion that

'if Ivor wishes to stay vonce or twice more, wouldn't it be more conftable if you esked vor nother couple blenkets?'

A great old lady (she was almost 70!) with an unusually modern outlook! And she didn't mention the bathroom!

In June 1965 I had started working for the national Coal Board ('NCB'), and Judy became the leader of Stamford Hill Youth Club in north-east London. Judy's working day usually finished at 11.00pm and it was becoming a regular habit for drivers in slow-moving cars to accost her when walking home to her flat from Golders Green station. Judy agreed that it would be best for us to move to Stamford Hill!

Accordingly, we rented rooms for a few months, on the middle-floor of a 3-storey house on the corner of Braydon and Kyverdale Roads. Unlike Mrs Silver, our landlady (Mrs Rosenblatt) was a nightmare who, after her husband died from acute prolonged earache, also started shouting and swearing at us. Such was the hassle, we eventually took her to court and won the case (for harassment); but because of Judy's status as a key worker in the Borough of Hackney, we managed to secure a 100% mortgage from the Greater London Council for the maximum amount of £4,999 on offer, just sufficient to buy a small 2-bedroom house in Lower Edmonton, N9.

My work in the Operational Research branch of the NCB comprised mostly economic planning assignments, designing operational systems to improve the profitability of its 230+ collieries. At the time, the NCB was the UK's biggest employer; it afforded me great experience but involved much travel to areas around the country. In 1969 Judy had just given birth to our first son Adam; she had retired from Stamford Hill (the Club was in the process of moving to a more appropriate ethnic home in Ilford), and my daily commute across N.London to the NCB in Harrow was becoming a burden. Consequently, in 1970, I accepted an offer to join the P&O Shipping & Transportation company and the enhanced salary enabled us to sell up in Edmonton and buy a house in Friary Road, North Finchley, where we still live some 50 years later.

MANCHESTER CITY v. SUTTON UNITED

In 1970, a turning point – my parents decided to move 200 miles from Manchester to Sutton. To my spatially-challenged Mum, the London Borough of Sutton surely could only be just around the corner from the London Borough of Barnet – but never mind, compared to Manchester, there was less rain and more sunshine down south; and to crown their new-found glory, there was a grandchild (Adam) on whom to dote, and another (Danny) being contemplated. The Guardian gave way to the Daily Telegraph, they started voting Tory AND they joined Sutton United synagogue!

It would be unfair to suggest that Dad's regular attendances at the Synagogue's Shabbat services were related to the mouth-watering prospect of an end-of-service kiddush, but the chance of a wee-dram was sufficient for him to side-line temporarily any secular inclinations. However, compensation for the Synagogue came in the form of music appreciation sessions which Dad organised regularly at the Synagogue Friendship Club, at JACS (Jewish Association of Cultural Societies) and other clubs in the area, using his substantial record collection of classical music and opera.

For 23 years Dad taught in local schools and at the Sutton Adult Education Centre until his teaching career was rudely interrupted by Sutton Education Department who, in 1993 when Dad was 80, phoned him to tell him that he should have retired at 65. Dad pointed out that he had been over 65 for the last 15 years and it was they who had authorised his supply-teacher role for the whole of that period – but the irony was somewhat lost on them. His accusation of ageism fell on deaf ears, but he quickly overcame the stigma of redundancy. However, Mum didn't; 'Get out from under my feet – go for a walk!' was her favourite admonishment. Dad duly obeyed.

Apart from their contributions to the synagogue, Mum and Dad had joined the Holiday Fellowship group in Wimbledon, and having always been an intrepid walker, Dad then spent most of his day-time hours leading rambling groups all over Surrey, Kent and Sussex. He completed, in 8 stages, the 85-mile Ridgeway walk from Wiltshire to Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire; and he completed a similar feat on the 100-mile South Downs Way, from Winchester to Eastbourne.

Dad just about coped with major issues – like giving up driving at 90 yrs.old after taking 2 hours to reverse out of the garage with the loss of just two wing-mirrors, and then impaling on the garden rockery his Lada car (a final gesture to Russian ideology!). It took some persuading to get him to recognise that going places by minicab was not a total disaster and could even be an economic advantage when compared to motor insurance premiums!

My parents' life in Sutton was very active. When not walking, Mum and Dad were active ballroom dancers, twice a week in Wimbledon, right through until they moved (after 35 years in Sutton) to a sheltered housing development in Finchley, at the ages of 84 and 92 respectively.

Mum & Dad; 2005



PROGRESSIVE, OR WHAT?

In 1970 when we moved into our current house in North Finchley, much of our social life revolved around long-standing friendships with the *Habonim* crowd of Judy's teenage years; and, to this day, is still the case. Many of them now live in Israel, but we still meet them often, albeit more frequently with those that still live in North London. There is something about the attitudes fostered by *Habonim*, whether a healthy scepticism about religion and/or politics, or a commitment to serving the community, that sits very comfortably within my secular orbit.

With no lesser importance, we have maintained strong relationships with Judy's Cardiffian friends from 60-70 years ago, my friends from the NCB (that's another story!), my bridge group, my long-standing (30 years) mountain-walking group, our local Gentlemen's Walking Club (afflicted with multiple variations of the arthritic gene) and our respective families from Manchester and Cardiff.

However, the arrival in 1972 of Barbie Goodman to live next-door-but-one, heralded an introduction to what I subsequently learned to be the 'Yekker' crowd of Belsize Square, a parallel social scene which is still vividly active today. I can't name them all, and I'm sure I'll get shot for missing out someone, but this is a group comprising (loosely, and in alphabetic order!) members of the Bub, Godfrey, Goodman, Klee, Leon, Lepski, Lesser, Mariner/ Straus and Marshall families. We've witnessed births, barmitzvahs, marriages, divorces, deaths and a host of other, unmentionable events. We've travelled together to France, Italy, Portugal, Spain etc etc; and to lots of restaurants in London! And we live to tell the tales on our weekly Zoom expeditions during the current Coronavirus epidemic.

By 1982 we had departed a little acrimoniously from Finchley Reform (they forgot to prepare Adam's barmitzvah, which we managed to hold at the *Kotel* in Jerusalem). It seemed only natural to then join Belsize Square Synagogue, where we remained as members for some 17 years before making an 'unprogressive' move to Finchley Progressive. That didn't last long; the fervent religiosity of a group who had chosen to be on the fringe of traditional Judaism, somehow felt uncomfortable. Secularism takes some beating!

EAST v. WEST

Having a foot in two main Jewish camps, *Habonim* and *Belsize Square*, has raised several points of division as well as commonality. Judaism, being the principal common feature, seems to be the less important element. As a gross generalisation, attitudes towards politics, social issues and economic problems, appear (to me, that is) to be more a reflection of origins; those from East Europe of Polish/Lithuanian/'White-Russian' stock being different from West Europeans of German/Austrian ancestry. No 'pros and cons'; just differences. I'll leave this discussion to another time and place! But let humour, unquestionably the most common feature to cross the divide, prevail!

'THE OTHER LOT'

A significant part of my life has been spent outside Jewish circles. No regrets; on the contrary, I feel that I have benefitted – significantly! I never wanted to be claustrophobically bound by a close-knit Jewish community, with the attendant risks of becoming blinkered to issues of the wider world.

Although I managed to score a goal against Arsenal's Bob Wilson, when he was playing for Loughborough University in 1961/2, my footballing skills failed to attract any interest whatsoever from either the professional or semi-professional world. In any case, work, home, wife and kids created such a demand on my time, that football training was restricted to 1 day per week; 10 minutes in Regent's Park followed by a couple of hours in a nearby pub. I played for the NCB Headquarters team in the London Commercial League until my mid-40s; somewhere along the line progressing from a high-flying high-scoring winger to the more sedate life of an aged full-back. I then took up playing squash, which occupied me seriously until injuries forced me to retire in 2011.

Of the NCB soccer team, 5 of us meet regularly every few weeks to plan (an excuse for a beer in The Queens and a lunch at Lemonia, in Primrose Hill) our annual city-break. So far, these 4-day breaks every May have enabled us to consume good food and jazz in all the European capital cities and New York during

the last 20 years. Subject to heart conditions, surgery and Covid-19 type conditions, we expect this tradition to continue.



L to r; Adam, Judy, me and Danny

My mountain-walking group has all but abandoned mountains. Five of us started off in 1990 with a few days in The Lake District. Since then, we (at times numbering 13, but nearly always including all of our core group) have spent a week each year 'conquering' most of Europe's highest ranges, with a catalogue of great achievements, great escapes and some tedious stuff in-between; but, generally, a laugh a minute (which I have tried to capture in a book that I have recently published, not for general circulation, I might add!). However, age, arthritis, heart murmurs, an assortment of deaths (not from the hikes!) and the realisation that the maxim 'mind-over-matter' no longer applies, have reduced our endeavours to an occasional half a day on flat terrain!

WORKING FOR A LIVING

My jobs at the NCB and P&O were, generally, really enjoyable and provided great learning experiences. At P & O, I started off in 1970 running management training courses before setting up an internal consultancy service to the shipping and freight operating divisions of the company. Eventually I was appointed Deputy General Manager of P&O Subsea, which operated mini-submarines and diving systems in the offshore Oil & Gas industry. For 12 months, Judy and I (and our boys) moved to the company's base in Montrose, on the east coast of Scotland – we rented a house there, and let our house in N.Finchley.

When a cash-crisis hit P&O hard in 1978, the company decided to close some of their operations (including the

Subsea division) and, although I was offered a management job with their Singapore subsidiary, I decided that was too far to commute from Finchley and accepted a technical redundancy.

Back in London, I did some consultancy work for a while before being asked to help set up a business to recover redundant telecommunication cables from the sea-bed; in principle, a highly-profitable operation which ultimately fell foul of a technical problem, the solution of which the financing syndicate refused to fund. The large fishing trawler which had been converted to recover the cables, and the processing plant near Hartlepool for separating out the saleable copper and steel etc, were then sold to a Spanish company in 1982.

For a year, while trying to decide what occupation to pursue, I lectured in business studies at several colleges in Central London before accepting the challenge of developing a franchised operation for a firm of accountants. Between 1993 and 1997 I developed 45 franchises before the company was bought out by a larger operator. I was appointed General Manager, but on a temporary basis because I had already decided to develop our family interests elsewhere.

JUDGE JUDY

The year 1969 saw the arrival of our first son, Adam, and then in 1972, our second, Danny. Notwithstanding the difficulties of bringing up a family while I was often away on P&O business, Judy had carried on working part-time in Jewish youth clubs in north-west London. Having set up a children's summer holiday camp for one particular synagogue, she realised the limitations of being supervised by a synagogue committee whose interference reflected that they knew little about working with children. She decided to 'go it alone'.

She set up Crackers Holiday Schemes, operating American-style camps, during all school holidays. Her judgement was perfectly timed. Needing extra help, she took on a partner and the business flourished for its 9-years existence until 1982 when her then partner secretly set up a rival operation. Judy immediately dissolved the partnership and emerged with her new company, Experience UK ('XUK'), setting standards (endorsed by Ofsted) for the whole of the children's activity sector. Judy sold the business in 1999. Her judgement was again on course.

In 1985, at the end of one of XUK's summer residential camps (at a school in Suffolk with a swimming pool), parents approached Judy asking if she had thought about setting up swimming lessons of the type that she had provided (2 of her senior leaders happened to be qualified swimming teachers) on the camp. It didn't take long for Judy to exercise her judgement again. Within a couple of weeks, she hired time at a local school, employed her 2 swimming teachers and started after-school swimming lessons. After 8 months, Judy (who, in the meantime, also qualified as a swimming teacher) had about 100 clients for whose children's swimming lessons she now hired pools at 3 different schools.

However, being critical of the way the pools were managed by school caretakers, Judy decided that the only solution was to operate her own pool. Our own boys had been taught at Oakleigh Park Swim-School, a private facility of restricted size, but which had set a precedent.

At this stage, I left my managerial position with the accountancy franchise to help develop Judy's vision. After researching the project to determine its economic feasibility, we then had to find an appropriate site. We could not compete with property developers but, fortunately, managed to negotiate the lease of a redundant plot of land at Finchley Manor Tennis & Squash Club, Finchley Central. It took us nearly two years to negotiate the lease, to obtain planning permission, to raise the finance and ultimately to construct a building housing the pool, reception area, coffee bar and activity room. So Poolside Manor was created, opened in 1988 by Maureen Lipman. Starting off with the then 140 clients which she'd brought from her after-school sessions, within 12 months Judy increased the clientele to 1500 swimmers per week, with a staff of 5 full-timers and 20+ part-timers, a level that was maintained consistently for the 18 years that we managed Poolside Manor until we sold the business in 2006 and retired (the business is still operating, with its new proprietor). Judy's judgement had paid off again.

While all this business was being developed and managed, Judy was also appointed as a real judge - well, actually a magistrate, which duty she carried out for 10 years.

DESCENDANTS

While Judy and I were much pre-occupied with business, Adam and Danny went their own way through their schooling, both going to Christs College, before gaining places at university; Adam at Bristol then Southampton, studying economics, law and accounting. Danny specialised in music and won the Young Jazz Musician of the Year Award, before going on to Keele to study Music and Education, and also to qualify as a schoolteacher.

Adam subsequently went to Law School to qualify as a solicitor before joining a major city law firm. He stayed in law for several years, specialising in the Film Industry. Some years later, disillusioned by both law practice and the film industry, he switched to the London Business School ('LBS') to gain a post-graduate qualification. This has now enabled him to pursue an occupation successfully developing and managing courses for new entrepreneurs on behalf of LBS, the Pearson Group and University College, London. Adam is married to Yaneth, who is the proprietor of a private clinic in Islington. They live in Mill Hill.

Danny is a part-time music teacher, part-time composer, part-time paramedic and was, for 20 years, a part-time Special Inspector in the Metropolitan Police. He is married to Emma and they have two children (our grandchildren), Charlie and Oli.

What the future holds for Adam, Danny, their respective wives and our grandchildren is a bit of a lottery. Unlike my grandparents and parents, they (and also my generation), have hardly been touched by the atrocities of war. The appalling working and social conditions that immigrants of my grandparents' generation faced are, thankfully, a thing of the past. But all is not rosy; the economic prospects, even before the damaging effects of the Coronavirus epidemic, amount to a different set of potential troubles; and anti-Semitism has not been eradicated.



***Emma, Danny holding Oli,
Adam, Judy and me, with
Charlie in the front***

EPILOGUE

My parents were not fazed by moving in 2005 from Sutton into sheltered housing in North Finchley. They were regarded as the Darby & Joan of the neighbourhood and, although they missed their old-time dancing, they were delighted to be closer to their family. However, in 2007, Mum fell, broke her hip and was shipped into Barnet hospital; but never recovered. She died in October of that year, aged 86.

This meant that for the first time in his life, Dad had to look after himself which, for someone who could barely make his own cup of tea, presented a potential nightmare scenario. However, typically, he threw himself into the task, learned how to use a microwave and carried on with his walking hobby. Every day until he was 98 he trekked to and around Friary Park, a round trip of almost 2 miles. However, he eventually found living independently too much to cope with and he moved, with the help of Jewish Care, into the Rubens House Care Home. There he was nicknamed the 'Professor', and generally kept the staff amused and busy. He was a keen member of the reading group and attended all the shabbat services (well, there was always a kiddush and an accompanying wee dram!). He presided over his own 100th birthday party, but gradually declined until he passed away in 2016, aged 103 - the end of that generation of the Tobiasz-Mikeleszatski dynasty.

Ivor Davies
27 June 2020



My Story

by

Evelyn



EVELYN'S STORY

Early Days

My parents Frederick and Ruth Schlesinger, and my then three-and-a-half year old sister Erica, arrived in Melbourne in September 1939, the last boat to reach Australia before the outbreak of WW2. They initially settled in rented premises situated in Hawthorn where they lived for short period of time. They sub-let a room to a young Jewish man, by the name of Kurt Lustig.

A short time later they purchased a farm in Lysterfield, near Ferntree Gully. I was born on January 21, 1940. My mother moved into a private hospital in East Melbourne – Mena House, which was run a by German speaking order of nuns, which provided my mother the opportunity to converse in German, as her English at the time was limited. The doctor attending her was Dr Fredman, who was welcoming to Jewish German migrants, at a time when the established Melbourne Anglo-Jewish community did not regard the recently arrived European migrants with a great deal of favour, and did not generally welcome them in their midst.

The following year, in 1941 my parents purchased a dairy farm three miles out of Dandenong, in an area now known as Doveton, which has become heavily urbanized over the last decades, and is now part of the City of Dandenong. My maternal grandmother – Oma Martha (Fraenkel) lived with us until she died of cancer in 1948.

Life on the farm was incredibly difficult for my parents, with no modern amenities such as electricity, gas or sewerage, not to mention the added problem of only having very minimal skills of the English language. This drastic change from a settled middle class European life to an alien culture, language and environment would have a long term negative impact on my mother, which would manifest itself later in her life. I personally was not really affected by this as a small child, as I did not have any knowledge or comparisons of any other way of life at that stage of my life, and I was a happy and healthy child in this setting.

Our nearest neighbours were at least three miles away, living on an adjoining farm. I did not have any friends or other children to play with, and held daily long discussions with the cows, pigs and chickens, my main topic of these conversations were my pleas to them not to attack me. They must have understood what I told them, and always

behaved. But dealing with people was a quite unknown social skill for me. When visitors came to see my parents, I felt so traumatized that I took all my clothes off, knowing that my mother would never allow me to be seen by them in that state of undress. This shyness has remained with me for the rest of my life, although I don't undress any more when visitors call.

Bath time on the farm took place once a week with the whole family using the same bath water. The bath tub was filled with buckets, the water being heated on a wood fired stove.

Heating and lighting on the farm was achieved using kerosene lamps.

My grandmother used some of the milk from our cows, and started making cottage cheese for our own use, in the European tradition, that had been in use in Germany from a time immemorial. Friends who visited always commented on the taste and quality of the cheese, which at the time was quite unknown in Australia. They suggested that it should be marketed commercially, as many of the new immigrants from Europe missed many of the foods they were accustomed to, which were not available locally. In those days spaghetti was served out of a tin cold on toast, and coffee came from a bottle with a brand "Turban", and had no resemblance to real coffee we now are familiar with.

The suggestion was taken up with the whole family getting involved in this budding cottage industry. My father milked the cows, my grandmother made the cheese, my mother weighing out the product, and my sister and myself packaging it. The whole production was carried out on the kitchen table. Even now over six decades later, I can still vividly recall the stench of the maturing cheese that pervaded throughout the whole house, with the cheese in cloth packets hung over the bath tub for several days for each batch.

This modest cottage industry born in our house would eventually evolve into a million dollar business under the name **Blue Cow Cheese**. How this name was created has a very simple and logical background. When my father was toying with the design of a suitable logo, he decided that the drawing of a cow would be a logical visual symbol to promote cheese. But at that time, borrowing my crayons, he could only find a blue one – so **Blue Cow** it was.

As time went by, it was time to iron out a few problems with the manufacturing and marketing processes that had

arisen. As the business expanded and the cheese was sold to a large Jewish customer base, my father wanted to produce a product suitable for those who strictly observed Kashrut, with special provision for food suitable for Pesach (Passover) when even stricter Jewish food laws apply.

He approached the Beth Din to discuss the process required. They outlined the required steps, which involved a supervisor from the Beth Din to be present in the factory to supervise every step of the process. My father said this was not a problem, and advised that this person would have to be on site at 4.30am when milk was delivered. The reply was that this was not possible, but the officials came up with a compromise suggestion. He could buy special Kosher le Pesach labels and just stick those on the packets of cheese, charge double the normal price and that would satisfy them. This raises question about the integrity of the whole concept of the workings of that august body that set themselves up as the arbiters of strict religious observances.

The Cheese Factory was finally sold in 1967, and my parents retired from business, which also saw the house in Lilydale sold. They moved to their newly built home in Alexander Street, East Brighton. This gave my parents after decades of hard work a new lease of life. They could sleep in and enjoy a well earned retirement. This allowed them to enjoy many great holidays, both overseas and locally. They took up playing Bridge, devoted Scrabble players, as well as Croquet, which my father played with a fierce determination to excel. They became even more actively involved within B'nai B'rith, where my parents had been active members for over 50 years.

Entering a new dimension

When the time came for me to start school it not only opened a new world for me, but also presented some serious practical challenges. It took at least one hour each way to walk to school, rain hail or shine. If my sister and I were lucky, a distant neighbour would come by in his jinker (horse and cart) and give us a lift. Otherwise it was a three mile walk, which was my daily routine from the time I turned six.. Today this would be unheard of, as parents drive their children to school every day. One of the hazards we encountered on the way, was passing a row of pine trees on our property before reaching the house. These trees were the home to a flock of magpies, and they would swoop on to our heads as we passed. To protect ourselves against these unprovoked attacks, we would twirl our school bags over our heads, but this was not 100% fool proof, and on occasions was not quick enough with this tactic, we would get pecked and come home bleeding where they had struck us...

We attended Dandenong East Primary school until 1948, until we moved to Dandenong proper, having built a new home in Scott Street, with all modern amenities. I then enrolled at Dandenong West Primary School, which was only a 15 minute walk from my house. Not only was it closer, but I had company to walk with, which to me was a great luxury.

When we moved into our new house in Dandenong I was thrilled at all the amenities, especially after living in a farm house with no modern facilities such as running water, both hot and cold, an indoor toilet that flushed. I even had a buzzer above my bed in case I needed my mother for anything.

The modern gadget that terrified me was the telephone. When it rang I ran in the opposite direction. I was not used to speaking to people from my house. It did not take long to get the hang of it although I still do not like long phone conversations.

I remember in 1946-47 the teachers were paranoid about hygiene. Children had to wash their hands regularly and there was lots of talk of illness which I did not understand at the time. There was lots of absenteeism, and quite frequently children did not return to school. There was talk of a polio epidemic and children were sent to Frankston Hospital, which specialized in treating polio. They were often placed in an iron lung to help the paralysed children and adults breathe. Some made a full recovery after months of recuperating, but many others were left with life long impairments. A few years later the Sabin vaccine was invented and every child was vaccinated. The vaccine came in the form of an oral medicine. Today most children have never heard of poliomyelitis or polio as it was then known. It has been completely eradicated.

For a couple of years my father continued to travel to the farm, to make the cheese. The ownership of the farm came to an end when the Victorian Housing Commission compulsorily acquired the land, and we only received minimal compensation. My late father never forgave the government for the rest of his life.

This was a terribly upsetting development for my family, but being very optimistic and positive, they managed to buy an established cheese factory in Lilydale. They automated a range of the cheese making processes, creating streamlined manufacturing process, which helped to expand the business. A small house was then added next to

the factory, allowing my father to stay the night, as it was too far for him to drive from Dandenong early in the morning when the milk was delivered, generally around five am, and too late in the evening when the cheese had to be turned, an important step in the maturing process.

Eventually my parents moved to a newly built house in Lilydale when I got married and moved out of the family home at the end of 1959.. When living in Dandenong, my parents insisted I receive a Jewish education. So every Sunday I would have to catch a train to Malvern Station, where the late Rabbi Herman Sanger would meet me, and drive me to Temple Beth Israel (TBI) Sunday School. Rabbi Sanger probably felt a connection to our family as, based on what I gathered from family discussions, I believe that his father married my parents in 1932 in Breslau.

After many years of attending Sunday School, I finally had a confirmation together with nine other girls. Bat Mitzvahs were not known in those years and did not become popular until many years later.

Attending Dandenong High School I had a very good time, but always felt different, and could never quite put my finger on what this was. This was in the days before Dandenong became the multi cultural mix it has become today. I was embarrassed that my parents spoke with a marked accent, and I had rye bread sandwiches in my lunch box. It was a real treat to occasionally have a pie and sauce. These days many families speak different languages and have all types of food. It is called multiculturalism, and certainly nothing to be ashamed about.

In 1952 my paternal grandmother Johanna Schlesinger, who had survived the war in Europe, having been interned in Theresienstadt and the final years of the war lived in Switzerland, and when she came to Australia, moved in with us, and became the home maker, while my mother went to Lilydale to work with my father. It was a very difficult time for them. My grandmother passed away in 1956 at the age of 84

Formal Treats

These included my parents coming to pick us up from Primary School on extra hot days which often reached 100 degrees Fahrenheit (40+ C) and driving to the beach in Frankston which in those days was a sleepy seaside town. That was a real treat, especially as we weren't told beforehand. The unexpected is always special.

During the holidays, going for a drive to the big town of Dandenong, which in those days was a lot smaller than it is today, to do our shopping. I was always allowed to choose a cake from the one and only cake shop in town. I always chose the Napoleon slice. We then walked up and down the footpath and I peered in the windows of Figgins Shoe Store and wondered what was in all those shoe boxes. The fascination for shoes has always been with me. I now have been in the shoe business for over 35 years.

Shopping at Moran & Cato was another special treat. There was no helping yourself to groceries. You waited your turn to be served. Then every item was weighed out and individually wrapped. Sugar and flour was packed into paper bags, butter was sliced on a wooden board and wrapped in grease proof paper. During the war years and for a few years after 1945 you paid with coupons rather than cash.

Another cherished treat was being taken to the city. Our father would drive us to Dandenong railway station; we would get on the train to Flinders Street. On those occasions we would wear our best clothes. Hats, gloves and our best jewellery were mandatory for such a big outing. We would always head to the Mutual Store in Degraes Street. This was the first city store to sell Blue Cow cheese. The next stop was Myers where we had lunch on the third floor, where the cafeteria was located. To me it was equal to a first class restaurant. My, how our taste buds have changed.

Sometimes I was allowed to travel with my father to deliver cheese to our various customers. When my father introduced me to our customers, I was usually rewarded with something yummy from the delicatessen or cake shops.

Jim Potter and his family, was employed at the Lilydale Cheese Factory and moved into the house adjacent to the factory, enabling them to be on site early in the morning when the milk deliveries arrived. These people were avid supporters of the Geelong Football Team – the Mighty Cats – In fact if Geelong lost on Saturday (in those days football was only played on Saturday afternoons) these people refused to work on Monday morning in protest, nursing their disappointment and ensuing gloom. This inspired my father to also follow Geelong even if only to see his workers on Monday morning, all bright and eager for work. This did not translate to his daughters – I follow Collingwood, and my sister used to follow Essendon. But his future son-in-law and two of his grand daughters continue the tradition, being keen Cat fans.

Family Connections

Following the end of the war, we were fortunate enough to bring the Bowkowsky family, Eva, Pavel and baby Manny to Australia. Eva is my mother's aunt. Eva and Pavel assisted my parents on the farm while I finally gained a playmate in the form of young Manny. Unfortunately this arrangement was not a long term one, as Pavel passed away after suffering a massive heart attack. Eva and Manny moved to Melbourne, Eva taking up a full time position as a dressmaker, with Manny being placed in the Frances Barkman Home in Balwyn, run by the Jewish Welfare.

During the war period I remember being told not to run around the paddocks surrounding our farm. At the time I could not understand why, but later found out that soldiers were digging trenches in case the war reached mainland Australia and mines had to be placed for defensive purposes. Every evening my father would sit by the wireless – and transmission was often intermittent – to hear how the war was going. All I wanted to do was to play Monopoly.

Another form of evening family entertainment was singing. We had a piano and my mother, who was a very good pianist, played the piano and we would all surround the piano in a sing-a-long. This is a form of entertainment that children of today do not have the opportunity to enjoy. And in my opinion are the poorer for this missed family style activity.

It is hard for our grandchildren and today's generation to understand how a world without television and computers or any of the other modern appliances that have become part of the fabric of our society. could exist. Even going to the toilet was a difficult decision, especially in winter. The toilet was outside the house about 50 steps at the end of the garden. Apart from the cold, or rain, it was dark and smelly; there were spiders and other pests sharing the space. My father had to bury the contents – euphemistically called "night soil" in a back paddock once a week. But the plus side was that mushrooms grew beautifully in the area.

We always loved going mushroom picking as well as picking blackberries. (In those days blackberry mean a fruit, not a mobile communication device)

In 1954 when I was 14, Erica and Frank Windmiller married, and I was very excited to be bridesmaid. The wedding breakfast was held at the Australia Hotel in Collins Street, which today is the Novotel Hotel. When they returned

from their honeymoon, I was offered a work experience job during school holidays at Windex Sportswear, the Windmiller clothing business. My duties were to run messages and deliveries from their work room in Little Lonsdale Street to the retail shop in Block Place. I enjoyed doing this, as I would dash through Myers and test the perfumes on the way, whatever the job is – “becomes a learning experience”.

In my last two years at Dandenong High School I lived a double life. I often carried a bag with a change of clothing when I travelled to the City or went on a date with Garry. At school we always had to appear in full school uniform, which included hat, blazer, tunic, and black lace-up shoes. The shoes had to be clean, but not highly polished, as the boys may be able to see the reflection of our panties. One very strict rule was that we were never to be seen in the presence of boys at lunchtime. Heaven forbid if someone saw me in a school uniform, particularly Garry and his parents.

In 1956, the year of the Melbourne Olympic Games, we were permitted to take days off from school without punishment, as long as we could produce our entry tickets to the Games when we returned to school.

This applied particularly to me and Garry as we had our first date attending the Opening Ceremony together. We also attended some of the heats of the athletics, as well as the Closing Ceremony. This was very moving. Everybody present, including me had tears streaming our faces. No other games have affected me in the same way.

It was a very exciting time in Melbourne. It also marked the start of television in Australia. TV sets were very expensive at the time and most families could not afford to buy one. It became quite a common sight for people to congregate in front of electrical good shops who displayed working TV sets in their windows. People would stand five deep. Each year the price of sets dropped allowing us to finally buy a set in 1960, the year Carole was born.

Moving to new horizons

After completing school at the end of Year 11, I completed a secretarial course. All the skills I learnt in those days have now been superseded with the advent of computers. After graduating in 1958 I had no trouble in finding a job.

In those days married women had great difficulty in finding employment, as men and single women had preference, a state of affair that in the light of today's equal opportunity laws reflected community standards of the 1850's rather than the 1950's.

Because Garry and I had already announced our engagement, I had to keep this very quiet at work, and never wore my engagement ring during the week. But on one occasion I tripped up. I had a doctor's appointment during my lunch break, and because I knew the doctor well, I wanted to show off my shiny ring and wore it. Unfortunately before I went back to the office, I forgot to take it off. This was noticed immediately, and the following day I was called into the manager's office and was asked to leave the job on the spot, after being told bluntly that the company policy was not to employ married women. I was not at all upset at this sudden turn of events, as I did not particularly enjoy the job, and was much happier having the time to devote organizing our forthcoming wedding, which took place on the 24th December 1959.



**1959 The
full wedding
party**



***1959 24th Dec Evelyn
and Garry on their
wedding day at
Temple Beth Israel,
Melbourne***

Garry's father whom I only knew for a short time before his untimely death in January 1959 was very welcoming to me, but was sadly missed at our wedding.

Learning to “become a Lady”

During the time I worked in the city at Felt & Textiles, I decided to undertake “a young ladies improvement course” at Elly Lukas School of Elegance. It was quite common for young girls, who could afford the fees, to take these types of courses.

We learned to walk nicely; carry hand bags the right way, to speak clearly and the correct way to apply makeup. We were also instructed how to pose for a photo. I soon learnt that I was not photogenic enough for TV, which had started in Melbourne just two years earlier, in time for the 1956 Olympic Games. I felt devastated at the time that my possible budding career as a television star was not to be.

While attending BBY, I met Sandra Super who also attended the Elly Lucas School of Elegance. Before attending the Elly Lucas School of Elegance, Sandra and I would meet up for dinner at the famous Melbourne landmark, the Russell Collins restaurant in the basement of the building next to the school. The food on offer was usually the roast of the day with three vegs. We thought this was heaven. Sandra later became my bridesmaid.

The following year Garry introduced Gary Marx from Sydney, who was billeted at his place during a BBY Convention to Sandra. They hit it off and married a year after our wedding.

Around that time my sister Erica and her husband Frank Windmiller joined together with group of friends and formed B'nai B'rith Youth Group, and one day dragged me along to a picnic. They said they knew a nice young man, and wanted me to meet him. I was terrified at the thought. But guess what, he turned out to be a sailor, and who can resist a man in uniform. Before that day I had never met a real sailor, and who had ever heard about a Jewish sailor?

Our first "formal date" was when he asked me to accompany him to a B'nai B'rith ball, which was held at Ciro's in Exhibition Street in the city. In fact the invitation came in a letter he had sent me when he was on a ship somewhere near the Barrier Reef. After three years of courting we got engaged late in 1958, and married on the 24th December 1959, just a few weeks before my 20th birthday. I lived in Dandenong and "the sailor" otherwise known as Garry lived in East Malvern. In those days Dandenong Road was a two lane road, with one farmhouse between Springvale and Dandenong and lots of open spaces. Garry keeps telling me if the price of petrol had been what it is today, he may not have continued to drive all that way to carry on the courtship.

When I mentioned to my parents that Garry and I might get married, my father and mother had a quiet discussion, and then offered me a trip overseas to think about this a little further. This offer was immediately rejected by me and I did not get a chance to travel overseas until I was in my 40's, but had no regrets.

.This also opened another lifelong involvement. My parents were members of B'nai B'rith in Germany, and when B'nai B'rith was founded in Melbourne, they eventually became actively involved, an association that would endure for over six decades. For me it was a natural progression to follow this tradition. I joined the BB Youth Group at the age of 16. I then joined Melbourne Chapter in 1959 before we were married, and the next year became a foundation member of Harmony Chapter, becoming its President in 1967. Following that I served as Secretary of BBWANZ. Two years, with the expansion of B'nai B'rith, a new Chapter was born, and I became "Auxiliary" President of Shalom Chapter. Currently I am a member of Mitzvah Unit, and have clocked up 51 years of continuing membership of B'nai B'rith. We have made some wonderful and enduring friendships through B'nai B'rith. In fact it is accurate to say it was the basis of our social life.

The evolving cycle of life

Following our wedding we had a wonderful honeymoon at Hayman Island. After spending two weeks there, we returned home to settle down in Reid Street, Murrumbeena, in the house we had purchased three months before we got married. I thought I had picked up a virus while we were in Queensland, as I did not feel well at all. But this turned out to be morning sickness, with Carole on the way. As Erica and Frank already had three children by this time, including twins, I was very comfortable with a new born baby.

***1960 Evelyn with
baby Carole,***



When Carole was born in 1960, I was only 20 years old. In today's society this is still regarded as a child, but in those days it was quite normal. After two weeks stay in hospital (because I had a caesarean) the average hospital stay was usually 8 to 10 days in the case of a normal birth.

After two weeks in hospital it was suggested that a stay in an after care hospital would be advisable. I went to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Carlton, which was specially recommended for women after the birth of the first child. They taught you how to bathe, feed and generally look after the baby. As I had a lot of practice in this area with Erica's children, I didn't feel this was really necessary, and while at the after care hospital, cried night and day. I presume this state of mind had something to do with the hormones speaking. They eventually allowed me to go home after 10 days stay.

When pregnant with Carole I felt really well after the first three months of morning sickness. I thought it was a good time to fake cravings. Each month I visited Dr De Garis in Collins Street, I had spaghetti Napoli at Janil Coffee Lounge located at 100 Collins Street, followed by a strawberry milk shake at Hilliers Chocolate down the hill in Collins Street next door to the Regent Theatre.

I repeated this routine two-and-a-half years later when expecting Vicki. At that time I was accompanied by little Carole who shared these cravings with me. Today the three of us still enjoy our spaghetti but have graduated to coffee instead of milk shakes.

The year after Carole was born we felt it was time to invest in a television set. This was a big decision to make as they were very expensive at the time, having only been available in Australia since 1956 when they were introduced just in time for the Melbourne Olympic Games. This became our main form of entertainment in the evenings.

The family expanded again 30 months later when Vicki entered the world. When she was born, even though I again had a Caesarian, after the two weeks in hospital I insisted that I go home immediately. I had home assistance for a couple of weeks which was greatly appreciated

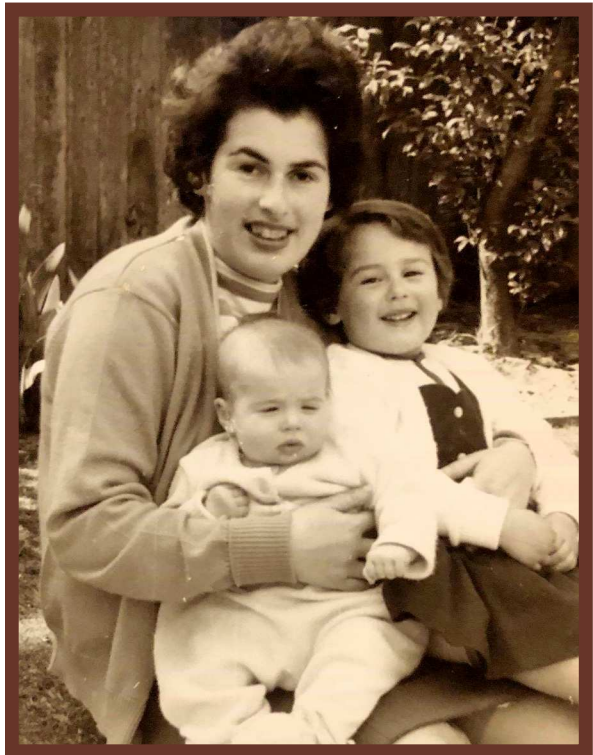
When Vicki was in primary school, one day I had a phone call from the school asking me to come in and to collect her from sick bay as she was feeling unwell. I instantly rushed to the school without make-up, and as I rushed to the sick bay, was stopped by a teacher and told to go back into class immediately. I explained that I was Vicki's mother. The teacher was most embarrassed.

The fact that I had two children is a miracle in itself, even though both children were delivered by Caesarian

section. A year before we got married doctors told me I would not be able to have children or lead a normal life without constant physiotherapy. I had a long term chest condition as a result of childhood measles, at a time when antibiotics were not generally available or administered. This left me with a serious case of Bronchiactises, which cause a deteriorating condition of the lower lobes of the lungs.

A few months before our wedding I underwent an operation, during which part of my left lung was removed. Fortunately I recovered well from the operation and did not give the doctors prognosis a second thought. At the age of 19 you don't take much notice of such things. Ever since I have always retained a chest weakness, but it has never slowed me down

***1963 Photos of
Evelyn aged 23 with
daughters Vicki
(baby)***



Working at Home

Before I rejoined the workforce, most days and evenings were spent folding and packing triangular bandages for Garry's medical supply business. I hated this but it had to be done and I did not have any other employment. The house was always full of dust and threads, so later having paid employment outside the home was most welcome

Returning to the work force

In 1976, while our girls were still at high school, were growing up and becoming independent, I wanted to enter the work force again after nearly 20 years of being "just mum", but initially lacked the confidence to take this step.

At the time my sister Erica was working as a book keeper at Startrite Shoes in Prahran, and was under considerable pressure due to the increasing work load. She asked the owner, John Hardie, if he minded if her sister could come in for a couple of hours a day to assist her. He readily agreed to the suggestion. I thoroughly enjoyed this and eventually was employed for longer hours each week. When Erica resigned to take up work with another firm, my hours were increased further.

The company employed three office staff and two store men/packers. When the owner relocated to Sydney, he left just two of us to run the Melbourne end of the business.

As time went on, and increasing volumes of Chinese imports reached our shores, the business suffered a noticeable downturn in sales in the more expensive English children's shoes that our company supplied to the retail shoe trade, and the business, which basically was an import agency, was sold to Sprague Footwear. At that time, little did I know that down the track I would spend over 20 years with Sprague, which is the parent company of Mountford Shoes.

After Startrite was sold I was employed at Halls Shoes in Toorak for eight years. Halls were actually a very good customer of Startrite Shoes, so I felt quite comfortable with them and adapted to retail selling quite readily. Some years down the track, the owners of Halls were offered a very large amount of money for both the business and the building in which the shop was located in the heart of Toorak Village. It was an offer they could not resist, and they retired. Once again coincidence played a part, as Sprague Footwear was the buyer, so shoes, shop fittings and I transferred to Sprague.

They asked me to work in their Toorak shop, as I knew all the customers. But I wanted a change, so went to their Camberwell shop, where I stayed for 11 years, including several years as the manager of the shop. At the end of that period I retired, and took my long service leave.

Returning home after an extended two months holiday, I received a phone call from Mountfords. They asked me to return to the Toorak shop on a part time basis, and now have just clocked up 10 years there since my so called retirement.

Leisure time activities

At the weekends we would go for drives and sometimes go out to lunch at the Moorabbin Bowl which was situated on Nepean Highway. The girls would call it "The Soup House" because they usually chose to eat soup there. Here the girls could run around without annoying any one, so we all were content during these outings. There were not too many choices for young families to go out to meals in those days.



***1975 Evelyn and
family at St Kilda
Hebrew
Congregation for
Vicki's batmitzvah,***

In the early 1970's we spotted a block of land for sale in Warburton, next door to the well known guest house "Green Gables". We bought the land, and built a small holiday house, with all rooms facing Mt Little Joe. We had some wonderful holidays there. But as the girls grew up, they wanted to go to parties and see their friends. Our visits to Warburton decreased, and eventually the limited use of the house made us decide to sell it.

In more recent years we have enjoyed many holidays both around Australia and overseas. The highlight would be in 2006 when we travelled to Stuttgart together with Carole, Kim, Ruth and Seamus. This coincided with the Soccer World Cup and the launch of Garry's book "A Look Over My Shoulder" in the German language.

We were able to show the children where Garry was born, including the family house which was not destroyed being situated on the hill above the city, unlike the central city during the war, which was totally rebuilt after the end of the war.

After almost two weeks in Stuttgart, we went our separate ways from the rest of the family, later to be reunited with them in Hamburg, and then returned home to Melbourne. Hopefully the grandchildren will always remember this 1st overseas trip. My own first overseas trip to Europe was in 1987, when I was 47 years old.

Family Events

After Carole finished high school, she spent 12 months in Israel, then moved to Canberra to study journalism. After graduating, she took up a job in the political sphere. While in one of her positions, she met Kim Carr, and they married in 1992. Kim was elected a Senator for the Labor Party in 1993. When she introduced Kim to us, initially I was a little disappointed that he was not Jewish, but as time went on this was no longer an issue. Carole and Kim have two children, Ruth and Seamus.

Vicki went to Melbourne University where she completed a Commerce degree. She later became one of the first female managers at the National Bank in the 1980's. One day Vicki announced she was going out with a young man. When we asked what his surname was, she answered "I don't know". It turned out to be Danny Lustig, whose parents and grandparents we had known for many years. Vicki and Danny married in 1991, and have three children, Jeremy, Steven and Kate

My mother, Ruth, passed away in July 1981, after suffering a massive stroke. My father sold his house in East Brighton and went to live in an Own-Your-Own unit at the Emmy Monash Homes. On 27th April 1996, he passed away at the ripe old age of 95. A few months later on the 13th June Garry's mother passed away. It was now time to sell the Murrumbeena house, which had been our home for 37 years and make a move to South Caulfield. This was something I had wanted to do for a number of years, but Garry's mother would not hear of it because she felt more secure with us living just around the corner from her.

When we finally made the move I was very happy and have never looked back..

In 1992 our first grandchild was born by the name of Ruth Johanna. Nine weeks later Jeremy came along. .



***Garry and Evelyn with their five grandchildren,
celebrating their 60th wedding anniversary***

When Danny told us the news at the hospital I argued with him that this was not possible for the baby to be a boy, as there were only girls in the family.

There is Erica and I, than we had Jenny, Susan, Karen, Carole and Vicki. Going on to the next generation, Ruth made an appearance. Jeremy broke the draught followed by Seamus, Steven and finally Kate completed the family.

The links with the next generations continue to grow and strengthen. Our children both have successful careers and are married to successful husbands. We now enjoy our five grandchildren, and look forward to seeing them succeed in their lives and chosen path they may follow in the years ahead.



Towards The Future

POSTSCRIPT

This has been a most challenging, and at the same time, rewarding, experience for me.

The reaction from so many of the wonderful contributors has varied from " I had sleepless nights" to "it was a wonderful adventure" and the consensus of opinion was despite at times the 'journey' being harrowing, it gave a new or renewed understanding of what our families went through. It appears that this traumatic time was rarely spoken about and much information here has been difficult to obtain.

It focused us all on what we had all been meaning to do for years.

The stories tell of incredible suffering, overcome often with humour and patience and these stories can now be read by others, making us realise that there are many around whose families have different, yet similar, stories hidden away and one thing that became very obvious is that we all carry the emotional scars with us to the present day.


Our children and grandchildren will read this CHAPTER IN THE BOOK and hopefully may learn from it both in the literal sense but also by being very aware of how the past insidiously creeps up on future generations making them aware that they can prevent it ever happening again...not only to Jewish people but in striking out against any discrimination. Please ensure as many people as possible read this book.

Anyway, enough of my sermon.

May I take this opportunity to thank all the contributors who encouraged me to undertake this project and without their cheerful co-operation it would never have got off the ground.

Ralph Kley

July 2020



**Real life personal
stories recalling a
shameful
time in history**